






$$2 \times 2 = 5$$



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A Comedy in Four Acts
By
GUSTAV WIED

Authorized Translation
By
ERNEST BOYD
and
HOLGER KOPPEL

NICHOLAS L. BROWN
NEW YORK MCMXXIII

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PRINTED IN U. S. A.

VAIL-BALLOU COMPANY
BINGHAMTON AND NEW YORK

INTRODUCTION

The Scandinavian theatre has come to be associated in the minds of the English-speaking public with problem plays, earnest, often incomprehensible dramas, which are usually denounced at first as "morbid" and "obscene" and finally buried in the consecrated ground of what is vaguely termed radical literature. There, when not entirely forgotten, they are occasionally exhumed by class-conscious intellectuals to serve as a pretext for some social thesis, or to fill the programme of a literary theatre. Although the comedies of Ludvig Holberg exist in several English versions, and his name was duly mentioned in connection with the Molière tercentenary celebrations, it would be rash to suppose that the work of the "Danish Molière" is very widely regarded as a proof of the existence of the comic spirit in Scandinavian literature. Holberg, I suppose, is the legitimate prey of the college class-rooms. Nothing has been translated of Schandorph, the great humourist of that famous group of "transition men," whose leader was George Brandes in the 'seventies and early 'eighties, the group which included Holger

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Drachmann, J. P. Jacobsen and Erik Skram, and laid the foundation of modern Danish literature. Thus we come to the successor of Schandorph, the inheritor of the comic tradition bequeathed by Holberg, the quintessential Dane, Gustav Wied.

It is not a mere coincidence that the comic spirit in Scandinavian letters has expressed itself in Danish rather than in Norwegian and Swedish literature. As every guide-book insists, Copenhagen is the "Paris" of the North, and the prevailing tone of its intellectual and social life is one of amused tolerance and happy scepticism, the mood of a people mercifully freed from the illusions and ambitions that harass other nations. Problems which exist elsewhere seem to have solved themselves in Denmark, leaving the country with a mind at ease, almost untroubled by the panicky fears of privileged imbecility, on the one hand, and the ever-hopeful aspirations of tearful radicals on the other. In such an atmosphere humour and satire flourish, and healthy mockery drives away the bogeys that haunt the uneasy dreams of contemporary democracy. Gustav Wied is the personification of that Danish wit, that ironic laughter, which makes Copenhagen irresistible to those who know it as a refuge from the humbug of latter-day prophets.

Just as most Parisians come from the provinces, so this typical Copenhagener was born at Holme-

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gaard, on the island of Lolland, on the 6th March, 1858. He died in Copenhagen on the 24th October, 1914, thereby disturbing the chronology of the following biographical summary which Wied once published:

"I came into this world quickly and easily on the 6th March, 1858.

Confirmed, 1873.

Bookseller.

Failed at matriculation, 1880.

In lawyer's office, 1881.

Failed again, 1882.

Tutor, 1883.

One day in the Blaagaard training-college, 1884.

Graduated 1885.

Cand. phil. 1886.

Gave lessons by the hour, 1887.

Poet, 1887.

Play hissed off the stage, 1890.

In jail, 1891.

Married, 1896.

Raised children, built a house, and will finally die on the 12th April, 1927, deeply regretted by sorrowing friends and relatives."

Except for the final paragraph this is an accurate outline of Wied's history, and little remains to be said of his personal life. He was a child of fifteen

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when he became apprenticed to a bookseller. "There," he says, "I sold books and pens and had to deliver parcels in the city, pushing a handcart. This wounded my sense of dignity in the highest degree." His repeated failure to pass the *Abiturienten* examination—corresponding roughly to matriculation—he ascribed chiefly to his inability to write a satisfactory composition. "And to this day," he adds, "I am often uncertain where a comma should go, and where not." The period spent as a tutor on a country estate was always regarded by Wied as one of the happiest in his life, although his conception of the art of tutoring was characteristically unorthodox. "In my opinion it does not matter so much whether children learn anything, as that they should be happy at their lessons."

When he came to Copenhagen Wied earned his living by teaching "at ten cents an hour." This lasted for five years, and then he began to write. "I ought not to have done so, at least not in the way I did . . . for the police . . . really, it is dreadful for me to confess it—I assure you it was the darkest period of my life, and I am horribly ashamed of myself— But I must confess it: the police put me in jail, me, who had myself been a guardian and protector of youth. And there I sat, sad unto death. Yet, it was just that little . . . accident which made 'something' of me."

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"While I sat between those bare walls I resolved to turn over a new leaf, as soon as ever I regained my freedom. I decided to take a course in orthography, and strain every effort to write my books in such a manner that the Pope himself could give them to his sisters as Christmas and birthday presents.

"That is what I resolved to do. As a matter of fact, it would have been better to have given up writing altogether. But I *couldn't* do that. And so here I am, forty-six years old, with a wife and children of my own, living between church and a lunatic asylum.

"How strange life is!

"Therefore I pray to God every day that I may not 'preserve my intellectual faculties to the end,' as the obituary notices say. After all, one is entitled to some rest."

It is hardly necessary to emphasise the irony in Wied's account of himself, and to say that his novels and plays have been a continuous laughing protest against the seriousness of life. After two youthful efforts, *En Hjemkomst* (1889) and *Silhuetter* (1891), which provoked in the author the expression of "regret" I have quoted, Gustav Wied began to write that series of novels, plays and stories which have placed him in the front rank of contemporary Danish literature. His first play, "A Homecoming," was a typical essay in the manner of Strind-

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berg, under whose influence the young playwright came when the Swedish dramatist's works were produced in Copenhagen. Wied threw himself actively into the fight to secure Strindberg a hearing, and actually took part himself in some of the productions. His own success began in 1895 with an autobiographical novel, *Ungdomshistorier* which might be rendered into English as "In the Days of Youth," and the next year came his first successful play, *Erotik*, which was also the first of those *Satyrspil*, dramatic satires, which he afterwards collected into several volumes, that are regarded by many as his most characteristic work. The most notable of these are *Byens Stølthed* (The Pride of the Town), a sardonic exposure of the morality-mongers; *En Mindesfest*, (A Commemoration), in which a husband and a friend of the former's dead wife recall the memory of the dear departed over an exquisite dinner, and under the influence of good food and choice wines celebrate a remarkable mourning. Schnitzler has done nothing better of this kind.

The list of Gustav Wied's works is extensive, including more than thirty volumes, of which nothing is known in English. His important novels, *Slægten* (The Race), with its sequel, *Fædrene æde Druen* (The Fathers have eaten Sour Grapes), *Livsens Ondskab*, *Knagsted*, and *Pastor Sørensen*, a series whose title, adapted from the first volume, might

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be "Life's Little Malignities," are famous all over Scandinavia and Germany. Also worthy of mention is that curious book, *Dansemus* (Dancing Mice), a novel cast in the form of short scenes, in which the action is explained by the dialogue, and the narrative thread sustained by the passages corresponding to the stage directions in a play. It is a most interesting and successful experiment in fiction. The cumulative effect of this series of pictures of life in Copenhagen is exceedingly funny, for Wied just flashes the light of his lantern for a moment on each place, like a good-humoured Diogenes in search of the ironies of the social order. The meeting of the Cabinet, whose members have an average age of ninety years, to consider the charge of immorality brought against the Minister of Religion, is as amusing as the arrival home of a newly married couple of which the husband suffers from shyness. Everywhere the irreverent wit of the sceptical Dane plays effectively.

Of all this work only one play has been published in English, *Et Opgör* (The Reckoning), which appears in a recent anthology under the strange title "Autumn Fires" and is listed as a "Swedish" play! It was performed by the Provincetown Players as a tragedy more or less, but is, in fact, a typical example of Wied's manner of reducing the "problem of sex" to an absurdity, as when, in this piece, the

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two ancients in the Old Men's Asylum squabble about trifles, but are united after one of them learns that his child is not really his, that his wife had been unfaithful, that his friend is the boy's father. The note of mocking disillusionment becomes almost Shavian in this little play, with its failure to emphasise the heroics of adultery, its realistic perception of human emotions as distinct from conventional attitudes.

When Gustav Wied published *Silhouetter* at the outset of his career, he wrote as its motto: "Let us have no solemn antics. After all, we are only human!" The phrase well describes the mood of all those charming *Satyrspil*, of which " $2 \times 2 = 5$ " is admittedly the most famous. It appeared in 1906 under the title, *Ranke Viljer* (Steadfast Characters), but the subtitle, " $2 \times 2 = 5$," a phrase of Paul Abel's in the last act, has become more famous both in Scandinavia and elsewhere on the continent of Europe. The play might be translated as "Men of Principle," for the aim of its satire is our tendency to dress up the desires and weaknesses of human egoism and ambition as the expression of the loftiest principles. Paul Abel is Wied himself, and his ability to laugh at his own foibles is one of the most charming traits of his work. The author is the antithesis of Ibsen, whose "Pillars of Society" deals with the same theme, for Gustav Wied does not look at

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society and its hypocrisies with the stern eyes of a judge, but with the mocking glance of a born satirist. He is, however, not a satirist of the order whose "indignation makes verses," for one feels that his occupation would be gone, were nothing left for his mockery. He is never indignant. As he once wrote, "the only real joy in life is irritating one's neighbours"; and again: "We mortals have a choice before us: either to bow the knee reverently before life, or to laugh at it until our sides ache—I have chosen the latter."

With the exception of Gustav Esmann, who deserves to be better known in this country, Wied is the only Scandinavian writer of his generation whose work is dominated by the irresistible force of the comic spirit. In spite of its occasional crudities, its lapses into mere burlesque, it represents a healthy reaction against the exaggerated cult of the ego, and the solemn preoccupation with spiritual and social problems which the influence of Bjørnsen, Ibsen and Strindberg undoubtedly fostered in the literature, first of Scandinavia, and then of continental Europe. With a malicious flash of laughter in his eyes Wied likes to snatch away the mask from the faces of pompous humbugs, to emphasise the human-all-too-human element in all of us, from Chamberlain Hamann to Miss Othella Lustig. His satire ranges from the highest in the land to the humblest, and is

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based upon the theory that "men differ from animals chiefly in so far as they make a great fuss about themselves." He sees the world dancing "to the tune of a higher hurdy-gurdy," and nowhere is that dance more diverting than in " $2 \times 2 = 5$," the most popular and successful of all his plays.

NEW YORK,
September, 1922.

ERNEST BOYD.

THE PEOPLE OF THE PLAY:

THOMAS HAMANN, *chief clerk in a government department.*

MARIA, *his wife.*

ESTHER ABEL
FREDERICK HAMANN } *their children.*

MATHIAS HAMANN, *a school principal.*

PAUL ABEL, *author and schoolteacher.*

GERHARD KONIK, *a caricaturist.*

LENA, *his wife.*

THE WIDOW TRUELSEN, *owner of a ticket agency in the government lottery.*

OTHELLA LUSTIG, *a lady of the demimonde.*

MRS. KLUVER, *the chamberlain's widow.*

THE LAWYER.

THE PRISON-CLERGYMAN.

JENSEN
SIVERTS } *watchmen at the jail.*

A POLICEMAN.

A PRISONER.

A MESSENGER BOY.

DORA, *maid at the Abels.*

The action takes place in Copenhagen before the present time; nowadays people are, of course, entirely different.

ACT I

Apartment of PAUL and ESTHER ABEL: A room, at the same time dining- and living-room, in the style of the Danish peasantry of olden times. White plastered walls and high, blue painted panelling, with a plate-rail all around.

In the background: Two folding doors with a side-board between. The door to the left is open and leads to the work-room of PAUL ABEL where a writing-table is seen in the center through the open door. Door to the left leads into the hall. To the right (of the audience) door leading to the kitchen.

To the left: In the foreground a broad double window with small panes, flowering potted plants and pink lace curtain with a valance. Towards the background a door leads into ESTHER's boudoir.

In the middle of the floor a long, rectangular dining-table with chairs around it.

The entire furniture, the doors and the beamed ceiling, are painted blue like the panelling and with pink lines of the same shade as the curtains, but near the windows are several wicker easy-chairs with table to match. The walls and the plate-rail are

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decorated with dishes and mugs of metal and earthenware.

Over the sideboard in the background hang two large charcoal drawings of PAUL ABEL'S parents-in-law.

Time: Forenoon.

ESTHER. (*In kimono, hair dressed smoothly in a "moral" fashion, stands by PAUL'S writing-desk, reading with great interest some letters, which she has taken from one of the drawers in which hangs a bunch of keys.*)

DORA. (*Comes from the kitchen carrying a trāy with the lunch. She immediately discovers MRS. ABEL who does not at once notice her. She coughs lightly*): Ahem!

ESTHER. (*Throws the letters quickly into the drawer, locks it and comes in. Lays the bunch of keys on the sideboard.*)

DORA. Beg your pardon, Madam, but I believe it was on the window-sill Mr. Abel forgot his keys.

ESTHER. (*Not hearing her*) Those silver spoons have not turned up yet?

DORA. (*Laying the table*) No . . . they were lost before I came here. . . . (*Pause*) You have no idea how they talk about Mr. Abel's new book over at the grocer's.

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ESTHER. Is that so?

DORA. They say it ain't good for young girls to read! (*Pause*) Well, things got fixed up between Jespersen and me; we exchanged rings last night . . . you can see for yourself (*shows her hand with the ring*); he had it with him in his pocket from last time.

ESTHER. Now, I suppose, you told him that you have a child?

DORA. Sakes alive, of course I didn't. It is none of his business . . . it ain't his'n.

ESTHER. Ahem!

DORA. Does Madam mind my going out again after I wash the dishes. I am going to a party with Hansen at my parents'.

ESTHER. But you said that you were engaged to. . . .

DORA. Ye-es, but it is some kind of a farewell party they are givin' us before I fall back on Jespersen— Do you mind if I go?

ESTHER. No, you run along.

DORA. Gracious, I hear Mr. Abel's voice! (*Goes out.*)

ESTHER. (*Takes the keys quickly from the side-board and puts them on the window-sill*)

PAUL. (*Comes in, humming, from the hall with a package and a bouquet of flowers*) Good morn-

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ing, little wife! (*Hands her the flowers*) Here you are, they are for you.

ESTHER. Thanks . . . have you bought flowers again? . . . Just think of it, we can't find those silver spoons, Paul.

PAUL. Dear me, are you still whining about them?

ESTHER. "Whining," well . . . four lovely silver spoons! Have you any idea who could have taken them?

PAUL. Probably someone who needed them . . . (*Goes into his room and looks for something on the writing-desk*)

ESTHER. My arm keeps on hurting me, I can't understand what is the matter with it.

PAUL. Maybe you broke it while you slept.

ESTHER. Ah, I can't ever get a sensible word out of you.

PAUL. (*Laughing*) No, you certainly are the profound element in this marriage! Haven't you seen my keys?

ESTHER. No.

PAUL. (*Comes in again*) Why hasn't little wifey changed her dress when she knows her husband would like her to?

ESTHER. We have the washwoman here. . . .

PAUL. Good gracious, what a reason!

ESTHER. (*Pointing*) There are your keys.

PAUL. Oh, yes, now I remember! (*Taking the*

keys) Aren't we going to eat soon, little woman? I am as hungry as a dog.

ESTHER. Yes, go ahead, the lunch is ready. . . . What was in the package you were carrying?

PAUL. I am almost afraid to tell you.

ESTHER. What have you bought now? You know we can't afford it.

PAUL. Patent leather shoes. . . .

ESTHER. *P a t e n t* leather shoes!

PAUL. Yes, but quite cheap, very cheap! I have always wanted a pair so badly; and now my book has come out I felt that . . . Let me show them to you, they are nice . . . (*Gets the package and opens it*) Look here; and so cheap . . . 18 crowns. . . .

ESTHER. Of course it is *your* money!

PAUL. (*Finds a piece of paper in one of the shoes*) What's that . . . (*Reads*) "We do not guarantee the patent leather." (*Laughs merrily*) What a damned scoundrel of a shoemaker! He didn't say a word about that! Isn't it splendid? "We do not guarantee patent leather" . . . And I bought them just because they *were* patent leather. Ha, ha, ha.

ESTHER. And that amuses you?

PAUL. Yes, those little foxy tricks always amuse me. . . . (*Goes out with the shoes*)

ESTHER. I should take them back.

PAUL. I know very well you would.

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ESTHER. Or he would have had to let me have them for sixteen crowns; he ought to have told you beforehand.

PAUL. But, my dear, then it would not have been funny. Now I can amuse myself over it every time I wear them.

ESTHER. Ahem. . . . Let us have lunch.

PAUL. (*Comes in*) All right.

ESTHER. Just think of it, Paul, Glud, the tailor down in the basement, had one of his legs cut off yesterday at the hospital.

PAUL. Well, that was nice for him. . . .

ESTHER. Nice?

PAUL. Yes, for now he will get a wooden leg.

ESTHER. And you call that "nice"?

PAUL. Yes, it has always been the height of my ambition to have a wooden leg. Wooden leg, red hair and an undershot jaw seemed to me the acme of physical beauty. . . . Especially if one person had all three.

ESTHER. (*Indignantly*) Well, let us have something to eat.

PAUL. (*Laughing*) With pleasure. (*Offers his arm which she avoids. They sit down opposite each other at the table*)

ESTHER. Just think of it, Paul. . . .

PAUL. The devil, must I think again?

ESTHER. Well, I have to *talk* to you.

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PAUL. Yes, but you always bring up such sad subjects. . . . Don't you know of anyone who has won in the lottery?

ESTHER. (*Serving him*) Here you are. . . . Here is some sausage.

PAUL. (*Looking at the dishes*) Thanks . . . This reminds me strikingly of a lot of islands in the Pacific Ocean. . . . You might have spent a little more on me to-day as I am free and am lunching at home.

ESTHER. We are washing. . . . And the house-keeping money must last, even when you buy all those patent leather shoes.

PAUL. I have only bought two.

ESTHER. Anyhow Dora is doing some creamed potatoes. (*Rings*)

PAUL. Potatoes are good. . . . That is what the Irish are dying of.

DORA. (*Comes in*)

ESTHER. The potatoes. . . .

DORA. Oh! Good Heavens, I have forgotten them entirely. Jespersen is out in the kitchen. (*Goes out*)

PAUL. No hurry, Dora, we can eat them with the coffee! . . . Seems to me that last month his name was Hansen?

ESTHER. (*Stiffly*) Yes . . . but now it is Jespersen once more. This immorality is terrible.

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PAUL. Yes, it is delightfully sad. . . . But look here, Esther, the newspapers have already started raising Cain about my book. (*He hands her some newspapers*)

ESTHER. (*Puts them aside*) Thanks. . . .

PAUL. You are really a phenomenon, little wife . . . in your own way.

ESTHER. I do not understand how you're not ashamed to write such books! And they are getting worse and worse.

PAUL. It must be some kind of a disease I have. . . .

ESTHER. I don't expect you to consider *me*, but are you not ashamed on account of my parents?

PAUL. (*Speaking to the portraits over the sideboard*) Forgive me, you two up there.

ESTHER. (*Gets up angrily*)

PAUL. (*Slightly tired*) Dear, sweet, delightful, charming Esther, what's the use of these eternal "scenes"? Come on now and be nice. You ought to learn to take a joke. That is the one thing that makes life tolerable. . . . And you know quite well that I love you very much.

ESTHER. I love you very much too. . . . But I can't stand you . . . !

PAUL. (*Laughing*) That's good! But come along and eat. . . . Or perhaps you want to wait for the potatoes? (*Eating*) No, you see, Your
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Highness, if you had only honoured me by reading my book. . . . Because I suppose you haven't read it?

ESTHER. No! Thank Heaven!

PAUL. No . . . for then you would have understood that on the contrary it is one of the most "moralest" that has seen the light of day for a long while—even though it treats certain exalted matters somewhat jestingly.

ESTHER. Yes, it always has been your strong point to mock at even the most serious things!

PAUL. "Love" among other things?

ESTHER. Yes, yes, that too.

PAUL. (*Smiling*) I always endeavour to calm the waves, little Esther.

ESTHER. . . . And I want to tell you that I find more and more that we differ so much in our point of view of life that we probably ought never to have married.

PAUL. (*Laughing*) There, at last you have said something sensible. (*Teasing*) But you came back to me all right, little woman. . . .

ESTHER. That was not my fault. My parents made me come back. (*The doorbell rings*)

PAUL. That must be Freda. . . . Let us be friends again for an hour or two?

(ESTHER *turns her back on him. A voice in the hall*)

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PAUL. (*Listening*) No, it is. . . . Well, if it isn't the "caricature" with his wifey! So you found your way up here once more. (*Beckoning ESTHER*) Esther. . . .

ESTHER. (*Turning away*) No. . . .

PAUL. (*Goes out in the hall and returns immediately with GERHARD and MRS. KONIK*)

KONIK. (*Dashes at ESTHER*) Aren't you proud of such a husband, Mrs. Abel? How are you? What a book he has written again! Splendid, wonderful, mad! He will go to jail some day.

PAUL. Don't talk to my wife about my books, Gerhard, she does not read them.

KONIK. Rats! I know of course that all women are more or less crazy but . . .

ESTHER. (*Stiffly*) No, it is really true, Mr. Konik. . . .

KONIK. The woman must be crazy, Lena!

MRS. KONIK. Shame on you, Gerhard.

PAUL. Dear Esther, those two abnormal people have been married nine years and during all that time they have not been separated for an hour.

ESTHER. You have told me that *already*.

KONIK. That's because Lena gets asthma when I do not sit close up against her. . . . This is a splendid room, Paul.

PAUL. Yes, isn't it. Won't you have a bit of

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lunch with us? It is reported that the girl has some creamed potatoes. . . .

ESTHER. My husband is always so witty. . . .

MRS. KONIK. Thank you, but we have just had lunch.

PAUL. A cup of coffee?

KONIK. I hate coffee.

PAUL. Oh, heavens! A cigar then?

KONIK. Thanks.

PAUL. (*Goes into his room*)

KONIK. Look at the room, Lena!

MRS. KONIK. Yes, it is splendid. . . .

KONIK. Insane—splendiferous.

PAUL. (*Bringing cigars*)

ESTHER. That is my husband's taste, not mine. . . .

KONIK. You ought to consult a good physician!

PAUL. My taste is not "serious" enough to suit her.

KONIK. Affectation! But who are those two elderly gorillas hanging there? I'll be damned if *they* are decorative. . . .

PAUL. (*Blows his nose ostentatiously*)

ESTHER. They are my parents, Mr. Konik. . . .

KONIK. The Lord have mercy on me. . . . Yes, of course I meant . . . I beg your pardon!

ESTHER. Granted. But I believe you would

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rather be alone with your friends a while, Paul. . . . I have the washwoman in to-day, Mrs. Konik, so you will excuse me. (*Goes into the boudoir and closes the door*)

KONIK. (*Embarrassed*) Gracious, now I have insulted *her*.

MRS. KONIK. You talk too much, Gerhard.

KONIK. I'm afraid so.

PAUL. Nonsense, dear friends, it is because my wife is so touchy.

DORA. (*Comes in to clear the table*)

PAUL. Here, here . . . I expect Freda, so wait a bit.

KONIK. Have you *more* women in the house?

DORA. (*Goes out giggling*)

PAUL. Yes, and *that* is one to suit *your* taste.

KONIK. I don't believe it. . . . Lena is enough for me. (*With a gesture towards the boudoir*) Isn't *she* coming back here?

PAUL. No, she doesn't like untrammelled joy. . . . She ran away from me once because I laughed too loudly.

KONIK. Yes, I heard about it. . . . And you fetched her back with sweet words?

PAUL. (*Laughing*) Nay, nay, my boy! She came crawling back and asked my pardon.

KONIK. Thanks for the information.

MRS. KONIK. How you men like to talk.

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KONIK. Be silent, woman, when men are speaking!

MRS. KONIK. Yes, *you* are "some" man! (*Pats his cheek*)

KONIK. Get thee behind me!

MRS. KONIK. Look, Paul Abel, how he blushes. He always does that when I pet him.

KONIK. It is for you I blush. . . . That you cannot control your instincts when we are among strangers! But tell me, Paul, for I am very much interested. . . . Where did you find her, the jewel in there? *My* crown-jewel, as you know, I met in a dancing pavilion.

PAUL. And I found mine at a ball at (*points*) the chromos up there.

MRS. KONIK. (*Drily*) Yes, marriages are made in the seventh Heaven.

KONIK. (*Joyfully*) Aha, even a blind hen can find a grain of corn!

PAUL. You lack "depth," Mrs. Konik. Well, I got acquainted with Esther's brother at Rudersholm at the house of Chamberlain Kluver's widow, where he was studying forestry while I was tutoring the son who died. . . . I don't think you have met the brother, Gerhard? He is the limit! I expect him in a few minutes. . . . And he invited me to his home for a ball; and then. . . . But Esther *is* sweet.

KONIK. She looks like a hardboiled egg.

PAUL. Well, she *is* a bit domestic.

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KONIK. They are awful when they are "domesticated."

PAUL. If she would only brush her hair away from her forehead. . . . Don't you think so, Mrs. Konik?

MRS. KONIK. Yes, she has a very sweet face.

KONIK. Well, you see *I* place more weight on the spiritual side!

MRS. KONIK. (*Smiling*) Thanks. . . .

PAUL. I fell madly in love with her.

KONIK. Yes, you have always been so feverish. . . . Let me see: First there was Magda; then it was Fernanda; then Othella. . . . All happy names ending in "a"! "Othella the goldenhaired" . . . I have told Lena all about your "affairs" so you need not sit there and kick me! By the way, what became of Othella?

PAUL. Now, really, he is *too* bad, Mrs. Konik.

MRS. KONIK. Inexcusable!

KONIK. Wasn't she at the start something or other at the Chamberlain's?

PAUL. Yes, she was learning housekeeping there.

KONIK. You must have been a fine collection of insects out there! Weren't you by way of being a sweetheart of Her Ladyship?

MRS. KONIK. Now you shut up, Gerhard.

PAUL. Oh, let him go on, Mrs. Konik, it airs out the room so nicely.

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KONIK. And after all you ended, as we all end, by getting a sticking-plaster.

PAUL. After all Esther is not one of the worst. . . .

KONIK. Good Heavens, no! Marriage is the love's night cap; so we must all be eternally thankful that we are not burdened with one still worse than what we have!

MRS. KONIK. (*Embracing him*) Oh, you charmer!

KONIK. Paul, drag her off of me!

MRS. KONIK. Now we are not going to talk any longer about your "women." We want to talk a bit about Paul's book . . . and then we must go home and do some drawing.

KONIK. She is so puffed up because she earns more than I do by making those rotten embroidery patterns.

MRS. KONIK. Well, then why don't you accept the position of drawing-teacher you have been offered by that school?

KONIK. Never! Do you think I am going to accept a "job"?

MRS. KONIK. "Man is ennobled by labour," Gerhard dear, you know that very well.

KONIK. Nonsense! Do you believe, for instance, that Hamlet would have become such a noble being if he had had anything to do?

MRS. KONIK. Don't you think that he ought

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to Paul? Why, it is only a few hours a day.

KONIK. But think of it, to have to get up and go to the school with a sandwich in one's pocket! I should take poison after the very first lesson.

MRS. KONIK. It would be nice to have some steady position now the children are growing up. . . . You did not answer me, Paul Abel?

PAUL. It is not nice to be tied down. . . .

MRS. KONIK. But *you* let yourself be tied down. . . .

PAUL. Yes, and every day I am sorry for it.

MRS. KONIK. We cannot live on drawing in the long run.

PAUL. Seems to me there are enough things to caricature here.

MRS. KONIK. Yes, but it would be such a comfort to have a sure income to fall back on; especially when you have children.

KONIK. It is out of the question that we should have to "fall back," wifey! We'll get along all right. . . . And just suppose I should make a caricature of my principal for the newspaper!

MRS. KONIK. Of course you could not do *that*!

KONIK. No, but I'm sure that I should do it anyhow! . . . But let's talk of Paul's book . . . that's much more interesting.

PAUL. Well, what's your opinion about that?

KONIK. My dear boy, I'm sorry to say it, but

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this time the least that can happen to you will be partial beheading.

PAUL. (*Laughing*) Nonsense! My book is moral in the truest sense of the word. I simply show people as they really are.

KONIK. That's all right, but they do not appreciate that a bit! Ask my sticking-plaster.

MRS. KONIK. No, I really *must* say, Paul Abel, that . . .

KONIK. You hear it . . . the tone is enough.

PAUL. But I insist on showing them anyhow.

KONIK. That's the stuff! And a hundred years from now, when you are dead and harmless, you will be used in the schools and at the confirmations; they will read you aloud in the churches! It is only a question of persistence.

PAUL. Well, I'm not going to fail in *that*.

(FREDERICK HAMANN *creeps in, having slowly opened the door from the kitchen during the last few sentences. He is an effeminate young man, his clothes somewhat the worse for wear.*)

KONIK. (*Discovering him*) Holy Rembrandt, what kind of a fish is that?

FREDERICK. How do you do, Paul? . . . I came up by way of the kitchen. . . .

PAUL. How do you do, my dear Freda? . . . You're always welcome.

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KONIK. Is *that* the lady you were expecting?

PAUL. Yes, that's my sister-in-law, Freda!
(*Pulls FREDERICK out in the middle of the floor in spite of his resistance*) I must introduce you! My friends, Mr. and Mrs. Konik . . .

FREDERICK. (*Awkwardly*) Good day. . . .

KONIK. (*Heartily*) I certainly should love to draw you as a comic lady. What do you think, Lena?

MRS. KONIK. (*In a friendly manner to FREDERICK*) Please don't mind his nonsense. Mr. Hamann.

PAUL. Freda, won't you have some lunch?

FREDERICK. Thanks . . . but you have company. . . .

KONIK. Do you smack your lips when you eat?

FREDERICK. Goodness, no. . . .

KONIK. All right, go ahead and eat then.

PAUL. Perhaps you're not hungry?

FREDERICK. You bet I am!

MRS. KONIK. Just sit down and eat, Mr. Hamann, and let the others talk.

(*FREDERICK sits down. Mrs. KONIK offers him food*)

KONIK. (*To Paul*) He is tremendous!

PAUL. Yes, isn't he great? He is the most human element in the Hamann family. I simply love him!

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FREDERICK. (*To Mrs. KONIK*) Thanks, Madam, how kind you are. . . . (*Eats—sighs deeply*)

PAUL. What's the trouble, Freda?

FREDERICK. Oh, nothing—or at least almost nothing. . . . Where is my sister?

KONIK. (*Pointing*) She's in there sulking.

FREDERICK. Again . . . ? Ah yes, life is not always a bed of roses.

PAUL. You really ought to try to get something to do, little Freda.

FREDERICK. My goodness, Paul, you know I am always looking for a position!

PAUL. And how about that position in Sorö?

FREDERICK. Isn't it strange, that whenever I write to people they seem so pleasant and write me to come and see them. . . . But when they *see* me. . . . I ought to have become a poet. . . .

KONIK. He is a wonder!

Mrs. KONIK. (*Offering him food*) Help yourself, Mr. Hamann. . . .

FREDERICK. A thousand thanks. . . . Yes, the ladies have always liked me! Oh, Paul, I met Valborg to-day. . . .

PAUL. Well, what did she have to say?

FREDERICK. Unfortunately her mother is once more improving, the old devil, and there is a chance of her being perfectly cured. . . . (*To Mrs. KONIK*)

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Valborg is a sort of fiancée I have, but her tyrannical mother objects to our engagement.

PAUL. Yes, and furthermore Valborg has money.

FREDERICK. Yes, lots of it! But she can't get it until her mother, that old fury, dies.

MRS. KONIK. One does not talk in that manner of the mother of one's fiancée, Mr. Hamann.

FREDERICK. You bet your life you do, when you know her! Valborg Swanshield is the name of my little friend.

MRS. KONIK. What a sweet name. . . .

FREDERICK. Ah, love, Mrs. Konik, and helpfulness! It seems to me that the well-to-do ought to open their purses a little wider . . . don't you?

MRS. KONIK. (*Somewhat confused*) Ye-es. . . . (*Handing him a dish*) Here you are, smoked her-ring.

FREDERICK. (*Puts it on his plate*) Thank you . . . you radiate kindness!

KONIK. (*To PAUL*) He is unique! Just look at Lena, she is quite gone on him.

FREDERICK. (*To MRS. KONIK*) Do you love your husband?

MRS. KONIK. I do.

FREDERICK. You know that it is not all wives who love their husbands . . . isn't that so?

MRS. KONIK. Yes, unfortunately. . . .

FREDERICK. (*Who during the last part of the*

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conversation has been somewhat absent-minded and has been waiting for PAUL to turn his back, makes some mystic signs to MRS. KONIK as if asking her to say nothing about what he is doing; he takes some silver spoons from his pocket and places them on the table) Swear that you will be silent! Recently I was without means of support. . . .

MRS. KONIK. (*Thoroughly puzzled*)

KONIK. (*Noticing FREDERICK's actions, says to PAUL*) Aha, so he *steals* too!

PAUL. I thought he was the person who must have taken them. Oh, no, he merely borrows.

KONIK. He is a wonder! I wish Lena had a brother like him.

ESTHER. (*Comes in from the boudoir and goes quickly into the hall*) Here are my parents; I saw them from the window. How are you, Frederick. . . . (*Goes into the hall*)

FREDERICK. (*Gets up nervously from the table*)

MRS. KONIK. It is time for us to go, Gerhard.

KONIK. Under no circumstances! (*Pointing to the portraits hanging over the sideboard*) I must see them first in real life!

PAUL. Of course you must stay . . . they are really worth seeing.

KONIK. Does your brother-in-law *really* steal?—You must bring him along some day to our house.

(ESTHER comes in with MR. and MRS. HA-

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MANN. FREDERICK *has sneaked into PAUL'S room and has closed the door.* MR. and MRS.

HAMANN *bow in a reserved manner*)

PAUL. (*Introducing*) Gerhard Konik, the caricaturist and Mrs. Konik. . . . I suppose at the office you have often had a good laugh at Konik's drawings?

HAMANN. No, I don't remember. . . .

MRS. HAMANN. I have seen them and find some of them quite witty.

(KONIK *bows his thanks*)

MRS. KONIK. (*Aside*) Come on now, Gerhard. . . .

KONIK. We *must* talk a bit to them first, Lena! (*Steps forward*) That's a splendid son-in-law you have, Mr. Hamann; my, what books he writes!

(PAUL *visibly enjoying the situation.* ESTHER *looks at him angrily*)

MR. HAMANN. My son-in-law goes his own way. . . .

KONIK. Yes, so he does. Wonderful!

MRS. HAMANN. (*Smiling*) My husband does not think that it is just the right way.

KONIK. A new way is always the right way!

MR. HAMANN. Yes, when it becomes old and has proved its practicability.

PAUL. (*Aside to KONIK*) Go at 'em again!

KONIK. (*Perspiring*) No, then it is no longer

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any good, Mr. Hamann, for then new ways must be found once more.

MR. HAMANN. And everything old must be discarded?

KONIK. No, they hang it up in a museum and call it "history."

(MRS. KONIK *pulls at him*)

KONIK. Don't do that Lena! This is so intellectual.

PAUL. (*With a smile*) Now, for instance, when we get that liberal government they talk so much about, then you, my dear father-in-law, as a loyal official of course must . . .

MRS. HAMANN. You are quite right, Paul, a government official must share the views of the government. That is simply his duty. . . .

MR. HAMANN. (*Stands behind a chair*) My dear Paul . . . and you, too, my dear Maria. . . .

MRS. HAMANN. Get away from behind that chair; you are not making an after-dinner speech!

MR. HAMANN. (*Comes from behind the chair*) My dear Paul, we are *not* going to have that so much talked-of liberal government. *Never*. The conservative elements in our country are too firmly in the saddle for *that*.

MRS. HAMANN. (*They both forget, little by little, that they are not alone*) I wonder?

MR. HAMANN. And if we *should* get it, that very

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day my resignation would be sent in, I'll tell you that! We still have some men of principle in this land!

MRS. HAMANN. Yes, you have always lacked broad views!

MR. HAMANN. You don't tell me so?

MRS. HAMANN. It's the truth! (*ESTHER tries to get in between them but her mother pushes her aside—PAUL and KONIK enjoy the situation—MRS. KONIK is ill at ease*) You know what I think you ought to do, Thomas?

MR. HAMANN. No. . . .

MRS. HAMANN. You ought to subscribe at once to a liberal paper so that you could get familiar with the situation.

MR. HAMANN. Ahem!

MRS. HAMANN. Your brother Mathias is going to.

MR. HAMANN. Oh well, Mathias . . . !

MRS. HAMANN. He has ten times more sense than you have!

MR. HAMANN. Well, he isn't married either.

MRS. HAMANN. That's true.

MR. HAMANN. Yes, that's true! Perhaps you would like me to put on a pair of red trousers too?

MRS. HAMANN. Yes, if you think they would be

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becoming to you! (*They walk away from one another. Pause*)

MRS. KONIK. (*Aside*) Let's go now, Gerhard.

KONIK. Oh, this is too funny to miss!

MRS. KONIK. No, we're going at once. . . . (*To ESTHER*) Good-bye, Mrs. Abel. . . . I hope to have the pleasure of seeing you soon at our house?

ESTHER. (*Stiffly*) Thank you. . . . (*They take leave*)

KONIK. (*To PAUL who goes with them out in the hall*) You have an insanely wonderful family! Aren't you charmed?

PAUL. Yes, insanely charmed. (*Goes into the hall. Pause. Mr. and Mrs. HAMANN scowl angrily at one another*)

MRS. HAMANN. You were so silent, little Esther. . . . That wasn't quite polite to the company.

ESTHER. Oh, they only called on Paul.

MRS. HAMANN. Your husband's friends are your own . . . ! And then you are still in a kimono!

ESTHER. We are washing. . . .

MRS. HAMANN. In your place, little Esther, I should try to be more particular in dressing up . . . you know the first few years. . . .

ESTHER. Oh, nobody cares how *I* look!

MR. HAMANN. (*Steps forward*) We expected to find Frederick here, little daughter. . . .

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ESTHER. He was here a few moments ago. . . .
Ah, here are his hat and stick. . . .

MR. HAMANN. I wish you would get him in here. . . .

(ESTHER goes into her boudoir. MR. and

MRS. HAMANN scowl without speaking)

MR. HAMANN. Paul has a bad influence on Frederick. . . .

MRS. HAMANN. Nobody has *any* influence on Frederick. . . .

MR. HAMANN. Paul has! (*Pause*) This room is really a fright!

MRS. HAMANN. I find it both original and in good taste.

MR. HAMANN. I suppose that is on account of your being a "liberal"— But he has let us hang there since Esther's birthday.

MRS. HAMANN. We don't fit in here. I said that at once.

MR. HAMANN. But I still say that he has let us hang there.

MRS. HAMANN. No doubt it is against his real wishes. And I must say he is right.

MR. HAMANN. But we *are* hanging there, I maintain that!

MRS. HAMANN. (*Jumps at him*) Good gracious, how your tie is made up. . . . (*Tears it loose and ties it again*)

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(ESTHER comes in from PAUL's room.

FREDERICK comes behind her, shamedfacedly)

MR. HAMANN. Why are you hiding from your parents, Sonny? (FREDERICK mumbles something)

MRS. HAMANN. Now, Thomas, I must ask you to think before you speak. . . . And *don't* go behind a chair!

MR. HAMANN. (To FREDERICK) This morning twenty crowns disappeared from my desk. . . .

ESTHER. Oh, Frederick. . . .

MRS. HAMANN. You are so clumsy, Thomas! It isn't at all sure that he took them. . . . You didn't take that money, my boy?

FREDERICK. Ye-es.

MR. HAMANN. He confesses! You see!

MRS. HAMANN. Yes, he has always been so honest.

MR. HAMANN. It would have been much nicer if you had asked me for them, Sonny. . . .

FREDERICK. Only then you would not have given them to me. . . . And I simply *had* to have them. . . .

MR. HAMANN. And if I may ask: Why did you have to have them?

MRS. HAMANN. Now don't excite yourself, Thomas . . . !

FREDERICK. (Points, after some hesitation)
For those spoons. . . .

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ESTHER. The spoons. . . . So *you* took them!

FREDERICK. You see that I am returning them. . . .

ESTHER. You, who say that you're so fond of Paul!

FREDERICK. That's why I have redeemed them. . . .

MRS. HAMANN. Yes, Frederick will go through fire for those he loves!

MR. HAMANN. But to take from the little money your father has . . .

FREDERICK. I like Paul better. . . .

MR. HAMANN. (*To MRS. HAMANN*) There you hear. It's *Paul* who spoils him with his crazy ideas!

FREDERICK. (*With bathos*) Paul! The finest, best and noblest being! The only person that understands me. . . .

PAUL. (*Comes in from the hall with a letter in his hand*) It seems to me, little Freda, that you're taking my name in vain?

ESTHER. Yes, your "famous" name!

MRS. HAMANN. Frederick's good heart has made him. . . .

MR. HAMANN. "Good heart" your grandmother! Judge for yourself, my dear son-in-law: This morning Frederick took twenty crowns from my desk in

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order to redeem some silverware which Esther says he had taken from here!

PAUL. (*Merrily*) Mrs. Hamann is right: Frederick has always been very goodhearted!

ESTHER. (*To PAUL*) Is this affair to be treated with your usual levity?

PAUL. Why not call it magnanimousness?

MR. HAMANN. You are totally lacking in a serious point of view, Paul.

PAUL. Why do you call me by my first name?

MR. HAMANN. What's that?

PAUL. I ask why do you call me by my first name?

MR. HAMANN. I suppose that is one of those "liberal" ideas that one may not call one's near relations by their first name?

MRS. HAMANN. Frederick must be handled with kindness, then he can be influenced.

PAUL. (*Pleasantly at the start*) You're right! Frederick is simply the fairy-prince in the Hamann family! If I did not have *him* I should be unable to stand being married to you all! Frederick is a human being, that's why I love him. . . . You others are merely animated statues.

FREDERICK. I love you in return, Paul! You're the only one. . . .

PAUL. (*Laughing*) Many thanks, Freda! . . .

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And thank you for the spoons. If you want to borrow them another time just help yourself!

MR. HAMANN. You're spoiling that boy for us, Paul.

PAUL. That's true! . . . Just as you have spoiled Esther for me, father-in-law!

MRS. HAMANN. (*Soothingly*) There, there, little Paul. . . .

PAUL. Well, I'm going. . . . I have received a letter which must be answered. . . . (*Bows*) Please excuse me if I became really serious for a moment; I promise never to do it again. (*Goes into his room*)

(FREDERICK quietly takes his hat and stick)

MR. HAMANN. Where are *you* going?

FREDERICK. When you chase my best friend out of his favourite room then I too must leave. . . .

MR. HAMANN. You stay *here*!

FREDERICK. Good-bye. . . . (*Bows as PAUL did —goes out through the kitchen*)

MRS. HAMANN. Well, I know you may call *him* by his first name, Thomas, but what good does it do? (*Pause*) Well, we might as well be off. . . . Esther is busy with the washwoman.

MR. HAMANN. (*To ESTHER who has been standing like a statue*) Tell me, little daughter, is Paul nasty to you?

ESTHER. Nasty. . . . No-o. . . . He sits in his

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room and writes and I sit in *mine* bored to death. . . .

MR. HAMANN. Ye-es. . . . But when you eat?

ESTHER. Then we quarrel.

MR. HAMANN. Well, everybody does that, but. . . .

ESTHER. And then he buys himself patent leather shoes . . . and we have just about enough money for housekeeping! And he fixes up a room like this and buys furniture and flowers . . . and *I*, who so badly need a blouse to go with my black skirt. . . . And now I have also discovered that he. . . .
(Stops)

MRS. HAMANN. What have you discovered . . . ?

ESTHER. (*Hotly*) I wish I had never married! We don't suit one another at all. He is never serious; and you know I am so deep, and have such a great store of love . . . but he only makes fun of that. . . .

MR. HAMANN. Well, I told you so . . . but your dear mother . . .

MRS. HAMANN. If you think, Thomas, that it's any use to forbid two young people. . . . What do we invite people to balls for anyway?

ESTHER. No, if you had forbidden it, then I should have been quite sure to have taken him anyhow! But you ought not to have persuaded me to go back to him last year when. . . .

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MRS. HAMANN. My dear Esther, one does not leave one's husband in that manner. You see how your father and I have stuck together; let that be an example to you. . . . People must learn to bend and to give in to each other as we have, so that full harmony may be attained . . . ahem . . . ahem. . . .
(*The bell rings in the hall*) Thank Heaven, someone is coming!

(HAMANN, *the School Principal, comes in quickly*)

MRS. HAMANN. (*Goes toward him joyfully*) So it's you, my dear Mathias.

THE PRINCIPAL. (*Kisses her hand*) Unfortunately I am not coming on a pleasant errand, Maria. . . .

MRS. HAMANN. Not on a pleasant errand. . . .

THE PRINCIPAL. No. . . .

MRS. HAMANN. What has happened?

THE PRINCIPAL. What has happened is that . . .

MR. HAMANN. (*Pointedly*) How do you do, Mathias!

THE PRINCIPAL. How do you do, Thomas, How do you do? How-do, little Esther? Is Paul in?

ESTHER. What's the matter with Paul?

THE PRINCIPAL. It's this, dear Esther, that I have to dismiss him from the school—at least for the present. Much as I hate to do it.

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MRS. HAMANN. Dismiss him! Why? The children like him so much.

MR. HAMANN. Dismiss him! Impossible; why it would hurt me in the office. . . . And I am soon to celebrate my twenty-fifth anniversary there.

ESTHER. Is it the book he has just published?

THE PRINCIPAL. Yes, unfortunately, it's the book. . . .

MRS. HAMANN. But what has happened, Matthias? It can't be the book alone. . . .

PAUL. (*In the door from his room*) Good morning, Mr. Hamann! I recognized your voice . . . I may tell you, Mrs. Hamann, that this ridiculous thing has happened: I am to be prosecuted for my "indecent" book . . . I was just informed about it in the letter I received a few moments ago.

MR. HAMANN. Prosecuted! *My* son-in-law!

PAUL. (*Laughing*) Yes, isn't it a piece of impudence?

ESTHER. And you're actually laughing at it?

PAUL. Yes, my dear Esther, in a tiresome little country like ours, where it rains so much that an umbrella is the proper present to give the young folks at their confirmation as a start in life, we ought to be happy for the smallest ray of sunshine.

ESTHER. Sunshine . . . ! (*To the others*) There you see!

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MR. HAMANN. And so, Paul . . . I mean Abel . . . you call it "a ray of sunshine" to be thrown into jail?

PAUL. Yes . . . intellectually speaking! It is a change anyhow!

THE PRINCIPAL. My dear Paul Abel, don't carry the joke too far. . . .

PAUL. The joke? Why, I am quite serious!

MR. HAMANN. And you do not consider at all the shame and disgrace you cause your family.

PAUL. Not at all!

MRS. HAMANN. (*Soothingly*) There, there, little Paul. . . .

MR. HAMANN. Esther, little daughter, I trust you'll know what to do?

THE PRINCIPAL. But my dear, good Thomas . . . !

MRS. HAMANN. Have you gone crazy, Thomas? Are you going to force your daughter to . . .

ESTHER. (*Embracing her father*) I'm going with you! I won't stay another hour in this house!

(THE PRINCIPAL and MRS. HAMANN *trying to speak*)

MR. HAMANN. (*From behind a chair*) Hush! My daughter is right. . . . She and Paul cannot remain together! As a government official I cannot have a son-in-law who stands condemned by public opinion . . . ! And for all I care my wife and my

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honoured brother may say and do whatever they please!

PAUL. (*Calmly*) I thoroughly agree with Mr. Hamann.

ESTHER. (*Goes towards him*) You do, Paul?

PAUL. Of course I cannot bear to drag you and your "official" father along to the scaffold.

ESTHER. (*Unable to control herself*) Is it that woman?

PAUL. Which woman?

ESTHER. The one with the letters. . . . The woman with the golden hair?

PAUL. (*Smiling*) So you have gone through my private papers, little wife?

ESTHER. You want that woman . . . that's why you want to get rid of me!

PAUL. I was under the impression that *you* wanted to leave *me*, little Esther.

ESTHER. Well, I shall not stand in your way any longer.

MR. HAMANN. Good for you, little daughter. . . . You have the same high principles as your father!

ESTHER. (*Close to PAUL*) You'll never see me again. *Never!* (*Goes out in the hall*)

PAUL. (*Bows*)

MR. HAMANN. I shall take the liberty of sending

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my lawyer to you in a few days, Mr. Abel! (*Goes out to ESTHER*)

PAUL (*Bows*)

MRS. HAMANN. (*Confused*) My dear Mathias, we must . . . Excuse me, Paul, but for Heaven's sake, we must . . . Come along, Mathias; those two crazy people . . . (*She goes out with the PRINCIPAL*)

PAUL. (*Bows for the third time—and sinks into a chair, laughing*) What the Gods have put asunder let no man join together!

CURTAIN

ACT II

PAUL ABEL's bachelor apartment—the study. In the background a door into PAUL's bedroom and one into the hall. To the right two windows, a piano between them.

To the left towards the foreground PAUL's writing-table from the first act; towards the background a door leading into the widow TRUELSEN's apartment. In the middle of the floor placed askew in front of the piano is a chaise longue. Afternoon.

(PAUL and the widow in conversation)

PAUL. . . . And what good luck that my old rooms here just happened to be vacant.

MRS. TRUELSEN. Yes, it was as if I had a kind of presentiment, Mr. Abel. . . . People do not stay long together these times.

PAUL. No; it isn't easy to stay married for any length of time. . . .

MRS. TRUELSEN. Yet, a good many people believe in marriage, Mr. Abel. . . .

PAUL. And a good many people believe in Mohammed too . . .

MRS. TRUELSEN. Ye-es. . . . The good Lord was

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kind enough to take Truelsen before he got too bad, and then to give me this ticket agency.

PAUL. Ah, freedom! Golden, shining freedom . . . and then a ticket agency when one gets old.

MRS. TRUELSEN. Ye-es . . . But there is one thing about freedom; it kind of depresses you after you get it; and then you long to be tied once more.

PAUL. But you retained *yours* all the same!

MRS. TRUELSEN. I did that . . . but that is probably because I am getting on in years, otherwise I don't know but what I might have tempted fortune once more . . . worse than with Truelsen it couldn't have been— By the way, I hope Mr. Abel does not intend to take up with that Miss Lustig again . . . ? I saw her sneaking about here yesterday.

PAUL. Heaven forbid, Mrs. Truelsen; I was glad enough to get rid of her! What does she look like now?

MRS. TRUELSEN. Well, how do that sort of people look, Mr. Abel. . . ? You can hardly see them for all their hair! But what an evil piece of obtrusive femininity she was!

(The hall bell rings)

MRS. TRUELSEN. The bell is ringing . . . (*Goes out and comes back quickly*) For the Lord's sake, a policeman wants to speak to you! Can it be about the book?

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PAUL. I suppose so.

MRS. TRUELSEN. Shall I tell him that you are out . . . ? That's what I do for my other lodgers when bills come for them or such things.

PAUL. No, just let him come in.

MRS. TRUELSEN. (*In the doorway*) Come in, officer. . . .

THE POLICEMAN. (*Comes in*) Beg your pardon, is that Mr. Abel?

PAUL. Yes . . . what can I do for you?

MRS. TRUELSEN. (*Goes into her apartment*)

THE POLICEMAN. I have a letter for Mr. Abel from Inspector Rorby . . . The Inspector would have come himself but could not leave the office.

PAUL. (*Takes the letter*) Thank you . . . is there any answer?

THE POLICEMAN. Yes, the Inspector asked me to bring a reply if you were in.

PAUL. (*Opens the letter and reads it*) Well, I'll be damned! Please tell Inspector Rorby that I'll be there . . . and give him my thanks and best regards.

THE POLICEMAN. All right, Sir, good-bye! (*Goes out*)

PAUL. (*Reading the letter over again. Laughing*) Now he is getting a bit too adventurous! (*Voices heard in the hall— The widow comes in*)

$$2 \times 2 = 5$$

with GERHARD KONIK and wife—GERHARD carries a roll of cartoons under his arm)

KONIK. Did he come here to grab you, that cop?

PAUL. No, not yet . . . How are you, my dear Mrs. Lena? (*Embraces her*)

KONIK. (*Separating them*) Here! here! here! The girl belongs to me!

MRS. TRUELSEN. How lovely it is to see one's old friends again!

KONIK. Same to you, Mrs. Truelsen! Seems to me you have got thin with longing.

MRS. TRUELSEN. Oh, you. . . .

MRS. KONIK. Yes, he's the same as ever, Mrs. Truelsen. Ill-bred (*Petting him*) and irresistible.

KONIK. Don't touch me!

MRS. TRUELSEN. And how lovely it is once in a while to see a married couple loving one another! (*Goes into her apartment bowing and smiling*)

PAUL. And so, dear children, you see me sitting here again, praising the Lord as a bachelor going on the third month!

MRS. KONIK. Shame on you, Paul Abel, how can you talk like that . . . ?

KONIK. "Talk," wife . . . ? Paul had fallen as deep as a man *could* fall: He had married. And now that he stands upright once more you don't want him to praise the Lord?

PAUL. (*With a little sigh*) Ah, yes, it's easy

for you two; you sit high above all thunderstorms, hand in hand! But isn't it a bit of a bore at times?

MRS. KONIK. (*Indignantly*) A bore!

KONIK. See how she bristles! Do you know what I call her? The little soldier! (*Puts an arm around her*) Oh, you my ever—ever new little joy!

MRS. KONIK. (*Close to him*) Don't touch me! Oh, Paul, why didn't you love your wife?

PAUL. I really did love her! And she loved me, too, she said . . . Only she didn't *like* me! (*Brings wine and cigars*) Here's to your health, dear friends! And thanks for your faithfulness to each other . . . and to me!

KONIK. Here's luck! But can you keep away from women in future, old man?

PAUL. You bet your life I can! One does not sell one's birthright more than once— No household, no wife, no parents-in-law, no quarreling! What books I shall be able to write! I have already the outline of one and it is to be called "Liberty!"

KONIK. You ought to write that while in jail!

PAUL. That's exactly what I'm going to do!

MRS. KONIK. You men folks never grow up . . . But that's why we like you so much.

KONIK. Quiet, chicken! I'm afraid, though, that you won't get to jail, my dear Paul.

PAUL. I hope I do; the way I have looked forward to it. I wrote the book in order to be jailed;

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I wanted that experience too! And why do you now suddenly think that I won't get there?

KONIK. The new, liberal government, my boy!

PAUL. What about it? What difference can that make?

KONIK. Difference . . . ? Are you getting soft-headed? Do you think it will have any patience with all that morality fol-de-rol?—No, my young friend, now the fighters for liberty have taken the wheel it will be much better in our little country!

PAUL. I wonder!

KONIK. How can you say "I wonder," you fool! One has to live up to one's ideals.

PAUL. Yes, that was what my "late" father-in-law used to say . . . a few months since.

KONIK. Yes, by George, your father-in-law! Did he resign?

PAUL. Oh, no! He is still "sitting" as tight as he can, as if he had glue on his trousers! Remember he is soon to celebrate his twenty-fifth anniversary— Now I suppose you are going to caricature the "ideals"!

KONIK. Are you crazy? I have done it already! I'll show you all nine on the spot! (*Unrolls the cartoons he is carrying*)

PAUL. (*Bursts out laughing*) I'm damned if I don't believe you will go to jail first.

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MRS. KONIK. No he won't, for that drawing is not to be published.

PAUL. What do you mean?

KONIK. (*Embarrassed*) He, the school principal, won't stand it. . . .

PAUL. What business is it of his?

MRS. KONIK. Oh, yes, you see he is a "liberal" . . . and Gerhard has had to promise him that in the future he will only draw serious pictures.

KONIK. Well, Paul, can you see me do it? Only "serious" drawings! I'll take poison on one of my sandwiches, Lena!

PAUL. But have you *got* the appointment to that school?

MRS. KONIK. (*Joyfully*) No, not yet, but we had a talk with the principal yesterday and it will probably be fixed. 1500 crowns a year sure income! And you promised it for the sake of the children, Gerhard.

PAUL. Gerhard, Gerhard! That you, too, should allow yourself to be cowed! I could have sworn that you would not.

GERHARD. (*Sheepishly*) If you had a wife hanging on to one coat-tail and four ill-bred children of both sexes hanging on to the other, then you, too, would. . . .

PAUL. Never!— And I had so surely relied on

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you. . . . Now we two were to have taken a good whack at the "nice" people!

MRS. KONIK. Now don't stand there and make him sorry for it, Paul Abel. . . .

FREDERICK. (*Gliding in quietly from Mrs. TRUELSEN'S apartment. He carries a bunch of wild flowers and looks pretty tired and somewhat the worse for wear*) How do you do? . . . Pardon me. . . . I came up through Mrs. Truelsen's . . .

KONIK. How do you do, Hamann? . . . Well, I see you have not failed Paul. I thank you for *that!* He is just complaining. . . .

FREDERICK. Hell will freeze over before I fail Paul, Mr. Konik. How are you, Mrs. Konik?

PAUL. My, my, what a sight you are! Have you slept in the woods all night?

FREDERICK. (*Handing him the flowers*) They are for you. . . . I walked home from Elsinore, so I haven't had time to. . . .

MRS. KONIK. *Walked* . . . from Elsinore?

KONIK. (*Still sheepishly*) Have you become a royal courier?

FREDERICK. Ah, yes, I wish I had, Mr. Konik, I *love* walking. . . . Ah, you ought to have seen the sun rise over the Sound this morning, Paul. . . . It was wonderful!

PAUL. Ahem. . . . But I don't suppose you got the position you were after?

FREDERICK. No. . . . Another brute had better recommendations. . . . But I wanted to talk to you about that in private . . . Goodness, I'm afraid I said something impolite, Mrs. Konik!

MRS. KONIK. Not at all, dear Mr. Hamann . . . we were just about to go.

FREDERICK. May I take a little glass of wine, Paul, it will strengthen me.

MRS. KONIK. Let me help you . . . (*Pours out the wine*)

KONIK. Don't you want a cigar?

FREDERICK. No thanks, I only smoke cigarettes. . . . (*Drags out some big, fat cigarettes and lights one*)

KONIK. (*Aside to PAUL*) Seems to me you are so short with him. . . . it's a shame!

PAUL. But. . . .

KONIK. No, it's a shame! You know how fond he is of you. . . . Has he "borrowed" anything recently?

PAUL. He has done worse than that.

KONIK. Splendid! And what was *that*?

PAUL. I can't tell you just now.

KONIK. Has he murdered his mother-in-law?

PAUL. (*Laughing*) Oh, no!

KONIK. What a pity for I should love to know a murderer! Come along, Mother Lena, let's go home and be serious.

FREDERICK. (*To Mrs. KONIK*) Good-bye, Mrs. Konik. . . . There is no peace until the grave. . . .
(PAUL *goes out with Mr. and Mrs. KONIK*)

(FREDERICK *sits down thoughtfully—His cigarette dies out*)

PAUL. (*Comes in. Speaking severely.*) How can you do such a thing, Freda? Run away from an hotel in the middle of the night without paying your bill? You are getting rather too funny!

FREDERICK. (*In a sickly tone*) So you know it already . . . ?

PAUL. The police have been here.

FREDERICK. Have the police . . . ?

PAUL. How can you do such a thing? You must know that it won't do!

FREDERICK. But, dear Paul, I really didn't have any money. . . .

PAUL. Well, why the devil did you go to an hotel then?

FREDERICK. (*Puts both hands to his head*) Don't talk so loud. . . . May I take another little glass of wine? (*Pours wine and drinks*)

PAUL. Well . . . ?

FREDERICK. I was looking for a position, you know, and it always makes a good impression to stay at a good hotel. . . . And if I had got the position then, of course, I intended to ask for an advance and should have paid. . . .

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PAUL. But now you tried to swindle.

FREDERICK. (*Puts both hands to his head again*) I don't understand, Paul, how you, with your fine soul, can use such expressions . . . "Swindle"? Why, I had written my right name in the book at the hotel.

PAUL. Yes, and one name besides!

FREDERICK. Oh, you know *that* too!

PAUL. What do you think Uncle Mathias would say, if he knew that you had posed as his son?

FREDERICK. Well, by the Lord in his highest Heaven, I don't think you ought to attack me for that, Paul. I did that to spare my parents. . . . They have had enough sorrows of late! Was it the police themselves that. . . .

PAUL. Yes, a friend of mine sent me word on the quiet.

FREDERICK. That was really nice of him. . . . What's the amount?

PAUL. Twenty-seven crowns. . . . You did not live solely on codfish!

FREDERICK. One had to eat like the others there. . . . (*Hands to his head*) And then I did need a glass of wine after the disappointment. . . .

PAUL. The money must be paid by to-morrow noon.

FREDERICK. Must it . . . ?

PAUL. I haven't any to spare.

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FREDERICK. Why, I never intended to ask you, Paul, you have had enough trouble with me. . . . But couldn't you just lend them to me till the middle of next week . . . ?

PAUL. (*Having for some time found it difficult to hide his amusement*) Well, we can talk about that later. . . . Now go in and fix yourself up a bit. You look as if you have slept in a ditch.

FREDERICK. That's just what I have. . . . Out on the plain at the Hermitage. . . . Oh, you can't imagine how lovely it was!

PAUL. All right, but go in and have a wash. . . .

FREDERICK. (*Obediently*) Yes. . . . It's my early training that is at fault; mother spoiled me and father gave me the devil all the time. . . . I shall never forget your noble conduct, Paul . . . I swear it by the Lord in his highest Heaven! (*Goes into the bedroom, leaving the door open*)

PAUL. (*After a pause*) How's everything at your parents', Freda?

FREDERICK. (*Speaking from the bedroom—he is now quite at ease once more*) Thanks, fine! Esther takes the matter calmly; she has not my depth of soul.

PAUL. No!

FREDERICK. And father is about ready to support the new Government.

PAUL. The deuce he is!

FREDERICK. Yes, he is! But I believe it is mother who . . . You see his anniversary is so close.

PAUL. Yes, "Maria" has a healthy mind!

FREDERICK. Yes, and she has also made Esther comb her hair away from her forehead.

PAUL. Well, I'll be damned! I fought for three long years to make her do that! I suppose it is very becoming to her?

FREDERICK. Wonderfully, I tell you! But I believe they are getting a bit tired of her at home; she costs them money . . . and now they have me to. . . . And *you* don't earn anything. . . .

PAUL. Not so far, no! . . . But it'll come.

FREDERICK. (*In the doorway*) I have something to tell you. . . .

PAUL. From Esther?

FREDERICK. No, *she* doesn't understand you. . . . No-o (*squirming*) it is from . . .

PAUL. Well? Don't stand there acting like a corkscrew!

FREDERICK. It's from Othella. . . . Miss Lustig. . . .

PAUL. So *you* are keeping up that acquaintance?

FREDERICK. (*Eagerly*) I want to tell you, Paul, that I did not really learn to know her right until after *you* had left her!

PAUL. Aha!

FREDERICK. (*Comes in the room*) Goodness, yes.

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Of course I mean merely in a platonic manner! How beautiful and intelligent she is. . . . And then she is only twenty-three years old.

PAUL. That tallies for she was twenty-six when I knew her.

FREDERICK. And how she loves you! She says that she never has loved any one but you.

PAUL. No?

FREDERICK. She's coming up here in a few minutes.

PAUL. (*In dismay*) What! Is she? Are you crazy, man?

FREDERICK. I met her down at the corner just now. . . . She just ran home to put on a better blouse. . . .

PAUL. Under no circumstances. I will not see her!

FREDERICK. By the Lord in his highest Heaven, Paul, it's a shame! You don't know how happy she was when I told her the other day that you were a bachelor once more and lived up here.

PAUL. And you told her that, you jackass!

FREDERICK. Yes. . . . And it isn't good for you either to be alone in this way. . . . (*Someone is heard knocking discreetly on the hall door*) There she is. (*Goes out quickly*)

PAUL. Freda. . . . (*Laughing, partly embarrassed*) Well, this is the limit!

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FREDERICK. (*Comes in hand in hand with Othella*)
Here she is. . . . Isn't she lovely?

OTHELLA. (*Pretty and fresh, with golden, curly hair*) Paul. . . . Here I am. . . .

PAUL. Yes, my dear Othella, I am of course tremendously delighted to see you again, so young and unchanged by the course of time. . . . And I am deeply touched by the thoughtfulness of dear Freda, but. . . .

OTHELLA. (*Embracing PAUL*) No "but," no "but," no "but." . . . (*Takes off hat and coat*) Freda, please hang my things in the hall!

FREDERICK. Isn't she splendid! (*Goes out with the things*)

PAUL. My dearest Miss Lustig . . .

OTHELLA. Shut up, kid. I stay here this evening; and we are going to have a nice time, and then I shall clear out.

PAUL. (*Smiling, half conquered*) You have kept your good nature . . . and your golden hair.

OTHELLA. (*Embracing him*) Well, aren't you the least little bit glad to see me?

PAUL. (*Laughing*) Not the least little bit!

OTHELLA. Rats! You don't even ask me how I have been?

PAUL. No, that's none of my business.

OTHELLA. Oh, you . . . ! (*Goes away from him and looks about the room*) Freda, you must help

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me to re-arrange things; we want it just like in the old days! (*Sits down on the sofa and beckons*)
PAUL. . . .

PAUL. No. . . .

OTHELLA. Of course you will! Come on, now, come on . . . !

PAUL. (*Laughing*) I won't come!

FREDERICK. It's really a shame, Paul!

OTHELLA. Oh, he'll come all right, Freda. (*To PAUL*) Come on, come on, come on!

(*PAUL walks slowly towards her*)

OTHELLA. Sit down, sit down, sit down. . . !

PAUL. (*Sits down and kisses her*) Imp of the devil!

OTHELLA. (*Snuggling close to him*) Aren't you glad that I came?

PAUL. No.

OTHELLA. Oh yes, you are; I can see it in your eyes! (*Kisses him—gets up*) Come on then, Freda, and help me! (*She starts moving furniture and things*)

FREDERICK. (*aside to PAUL*) Aren't you glad after all, Paul?

PAUL. You must get her away soon!

FREDERICK. Goodness!

OTHELLA. What are you two whispering about?

PAUL. I am telling Freda that he must get you away from here soon or it will end badly.

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OTHELLA. I hope it does!—Come on and help me, Freda!

(FREDERICK *goes to help her*)

OTHELLA. And then we're going to have one of our pleasant little suppers, Paul.

PAUL. Not at all!

OTHELLA. "Not at all!" You can hear the fellow has been married! You never talked like that in the old times.

FREDERICK. O-oh, Paul, let's have a supper!

OTHELLA. Of course we're going to have supper! I'll pay for it. (*Takes out her pocketbook*) Freda, will you . . . ?

PAUL. (*Laughing*) You witch! Come here, Freda, here's money.

OTHELLA. That's the way to treat you, you married man! (*Plucks out a couple of notes from PAUL's pocketbook*) And now we must get hold of old Mrs. Truelsen. . . . Just watch her face when she sees me! (*Presses an electric button*)

(PAUL *unconsciously trying to stop her, but he is too late. MRS. TRUELSEN comes in and stands like a pillar of salt when she sees OTHELLA*)

OTHELLA. (*Free and easy*) How are you, Mrs. Truelsen; how have you been?

MRS. TRUELSEN. Thanks . . . quite well. . . .
(*Little pause*)

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OTHELLA. Thank you, I am quite well too! Now listen, dear Mrs. Truelsen, we're going to have a little party; would you let us have some dishes and glasses and whatever else we may need . . . ?

MRS. TRUELSEN. If Mr. Abel wishes to take meals here then I am the one to make the arrangements, my dear Miss Lustig!

OTHELLA. No, Mrs. Truelsen, you're mistaken. From to-day I am at the wheel— Come along, Freda, let's see what's in the kitchen! (*Goes out with FREDERICK through the widow's apartment. The widow and PAUL gaze at each other silently*)

MRS. TRUELSEN. Are you a man?

PAUL. No!

MRS. TRUELSEN. And you said a little while ago. . . .

PAUL. Yes. . .

MRS. TRUELSEN. And now. . . .

PAUL. Now she *is* here!

MRS. TRUELSEN. Chase her out!

PAUL. Can't do it, Mrs. Truelsen . . . haven't the heart to do it . . . the girl is so happy . . .

MRS. TRUELSEN. Ha, ha. . . . You men ought always to be kept on a leash! (*Turns and goes out*)

(*PAUL walks up and down the room, laughing—stretches out on the sofa. Someone knocks repeatedly at the hall door*)

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PAUL. (*Hearing it at last*) Are there any more? Come right in! (MRS. KLUVER *comes in. A little woman, dressed in black.* PAUL *jumps up from the sofa, surprised*) The Chamberlain's wife!

MRS. KLUVER. (*Smiling*) Herself, yes. . . . I see you keep open house, dear Mr. Abel . . . ?

PAUL. (*Confused*) You mean. . . .

MRS. KLUVER. The outside door was wide open.

PAUL. Is that so . . . ? Someone must have forgotten to close it.

MRS. KLUVER. Evidently! Suppose you offer me a chair. . . .

PAUL. Oh . . . I beg your pardon . . . I . . . (*Moves a chair over to her*)

MRS. KLUVER. (*Sits down*) You are so absent-minded, dear Mr. Abel. . . . I hope I am not disturbing . . . ?

PAUL. By no means. . . . I must have been dozing. . . . On the contrary . . . ! I am charmed to have Your Ladyship call.

MRS. KLUVER. Oh, you are? So "we" have moved?

PAUL. Yes, we . . . I have moved, yes. . . . The apartment was too expensive.

MRS. KLUVER. So you have started learning economy?

PAUL. My fixed income has been reduced. . . . I am no longer at the school.

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MRS. KLUVER. Fired?

PAUL. Ye-es. . . .

MRS. KLUVER. And Mrs. Abel . . . ?

PAUL. Mrs. Abel . . . well. . . .

MRS. KLUVER. Perhaps *she* has fired you too?

PAUL. Your Ladyship knows it . . . ?

MRS. KLUVER. Yes, I know it . . . ! Although you have not seen fit to inform me.

PAUL. I thought . . . I . . .

MRS. KLUVER. Come admit it, my dear friend. You were ashamed because your old friend turned out to be right.

PAUL. (*Smiling*) That's true.

MRS. KLUVER. See here, my dear Paul Abel, I hear terrible things about you!

PAUL. Terrible things. . . .

MRS. KLUVER. I have heard that you once more have published an awful book . . . and to cap the climax it has brought you into conflict with the police!

PAUL. I am very downcast. . . .

MRS. KLUVER. Indeed you are not! On the contrary, no doubt you glory in your shame. . . . But don't let us waste time talking about that. I have come here to talk sense to you. . . . Sit down here beside me! (PAUL *sits down*)

MRS. KLUVER. In me you have a mother who will never forget your friendship for her poor son. . . .

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(PAUL *kisses her hand*) Tell me, my dear friend, now you are once more a free man, would you not like to enter a safe career? I have good connections and I should be glad to be able to do something for you.

PAUL. I know that, Your Ladyship, and . . .

MRS. KLUVER. For instance, how about becoming editor of "The Conservative"? The position will be vacant in January . . . and I can get it for you.

PAUL. (*Laughing*) But, my dear Mrs. Kluver, that is the paper which has reviled me more than any other!

MRS. KLUVER. It would surely stop that when you became its editor.

PAUL. And my books. . . .

MRS. KLUVER. You would of course have to stop writing . . . in any case in *that* manner.

PAUL. (*By this time he has forgotten his other guests entirely*) No, no, no; I should never agree to that! It is very good of Your Ladyship, but . . . And upon the whole I do not believe I am suited for a "safe" career.

MRS. KLUVER. And why not?

PAUL. I'm afraid I have too much gypsy blood in me . . . I should run away inside of a week. . . . Your Ladyship can judge from my married life.

MRS. KLUVER. Your wife had a sour nature, my dear Abel! If you had taken my advice and married

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the jolly and light-hearted young girl I had picked out for you, and who would not have refused you, then all would probably have been well.

PAUL. (*Smiling*) Yes, perhaps so, Your Ladyship. . . .

MRS. KLUVER. Of course it would!— But we were talking about that editorship. . . This about “gypsy blood” is supposed to be so “intellectual”! But remember, dear friend, those times are past when the best poetry was written by men subsisting on bread and cheese. Every sensible person, even if he be a poet, when all is said and done, prefers to live under safe and orderly conditions.

PAUL. No!

MRS. KLUVER. You say “no”!

PAUL. (*Laughing*) That’s what I say!

MRS. KLUVER. Where ever did you acquire these proletarian ideas during the last few years? I remember the sensation you made long ago at Rudersholm by handling your fork with your left hand! I suppose you use a knife to eat fish with now?

PAUL. (*Laughing*) No-o!

MRS. KLUVER. Well, that is certainly *your* fault, my friend! The whole hog or none!

PAUL. But, Your Ladyship. . . .

MRS. KLUVER. Yes, “Her Ladyship’s” grace used to shine on you; take care that it does not stop doing so.

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PAUL. But surely, Mrs. Kluver, I cannot let a paper take away my good name one day and join its staff the next!

MRS. KLUVER. Many honorable people have done that! The pay to start with is 5,000 crowns annually and a bonus.

PAUL. I'll be hanged if I can do it!

MRS. KLUVER. Come now, young man!

PAUL. I beg your pardon, Mrs. Kluver, but I simply cannot—in such matters I am somewhat of a “man of principle”!

MRS. KLUVER. Very well. Then we won't talk about that any longer! I'm going, and in future Monsieur Abel may paddle his own canoe. . . . Good-bye, my carriage is waiting below.

PAUL. I hope Your Ladyship isn't angry. . . ?

MRS. KLUVER. By no means. On the contrary, I almost respect your manliness! But tell me how you are going to live when the schools are closed to you and they confiscate your books?

PAUL. (*Merrily*) I shall go round and sing in the streets!

MRS. KLUVER. And your wife?

PAUL. My wife . . . ? Why, she has her parents. . . .

MRS. KLUVER. Aren't *you* supposed to contribute something to her support?

PAUL. Oh, of course. . . .

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MRS. KLUVER. Perhaps you'll give her half of what you earn singing in the streets? She'll get fat on that! However, if you happen to be in Rudersholm look in on me; I shall put something nice in when you pass the hat.

PAUL. Thanks, many thanks. . . .

MRS. KLUVER. And if you *should* decide to. . . .

PAUL. (*Smiling*) I'm not going to do it, Your Ladyship, I shall NOT do it.

MRS. KLUVER. Is that the "man of principle"?

PAUL. Yes!

MRS. KLUVER. (*Patting his cheek*) You're a dear . . . but you're a little fool.

PAUL. I, Your Ladyship, who am a poet and a portrayer of humanity!

MRS. KLUVER. Among the poets are many fools.

PAUL. Perhaps so . . .

MRS. KLUVER. Of course some people call them lyric poets instead!

PAUL. Well, of course Your Ladyship is not . . . "lyrical" . . .

MRS. KLUVER. No, not with the Chamberlain I have had! Well, good-bye, dear friend, you still have a few months to think it over. . . . By the way: Beware of women now you are free! I know you have a warm heart. . . . Do you remember how enthusiastic you were over the little Miss Lustig, who tried to learn cooking at our house?

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PAUL. (*Turning both hot and cold*) Yes. . . .

MRS. KLUVER. Whatever became of her?

PAUL. I. . . . I. . . .

MRS. KLUVER. Oh, perhaps you have lost track of her . . . I remember she was with us at Rudersholm at the same time as your remarkable brother-in-law.

PAUL. Yes, I. . . . May I take Your Ladyship to your carriage . . . ?

MRS. KLUVER. Thank you. . . .

(PAUL offers her his arm and they go towards the door. Suddenly OTHELLA'S and FREDERICK'S happy voices are heard. They come in with various things for supper. When they see MRS. KLUVER they stop dead and become silent)

MRS. KLUVER. (*Releasing PAUL'S arm. Quite composed*) Aha, that *was* curious! Here we have both the woodsman and the housekeeping pupil! what fidelity!

(PAUL tries to speak)

MRS. KLUVER. No, you'd better keep your mouth shut, my friend. (*To FREDERICK*) Well, you still remain at the capital, my dear Hamann?

FREDERICK. (*Wiggling*) Yes, I. . . . I love Copenhagen so, Your Ladyship.

MRS. KLUVER. Then you really ought to get a job as forester in one of the summer-gardens! (*To*

OTHELLA) And I see Mademoiselle Lustig still looks after the housekeeping . . . ? Well, good-bye, children; have a good time! (*Goes towards the door. PAUL wants to accompany her*)

MRS. KLUVER. No, you remain here with your distinguished guests, my dear Mr. Abel! (*Goes out. Pause. FREDERICK busying himself setting the table*)

OTHELLA. Ugh! That's the way it was at Rudersholm! We all became so humble when *she* came into the kitchen . . . it was as if we shrank. . . . It is horrid!

PAUL. I did not think you would feel things like that.

OTHELLA. (*Embracing him*) Kiss me! Don't be so solemn! Kiss me, you idiot.

PAUL. (*Shaking off his ill-humour*) Oh, well! . . . what odds! (*Hums*) The Lord caused the vine to grow so I suppose one ought to drink! (*Kisses her*)

OTHELLA. What did she want anyhow?

PAUL. What business is it of yours, Mademoiselle Lustig?

OTHELLA. No, that's true; if only I have *you*! (*Goes to the piano and plays a couple of bars from the overture to TANNHÄUSER*) Light the lamp, Freda. Now for a good time!

FREDERICK. (*Lights the lamp*) *Tannhäuser!*

$$2 \times 2 = 5$$

Do you remember, Paul, in the old days, when Othella played *Tannhäuser* and you stretched out on the sofa and I sat in the easy-chair . . . ? Goodness, how wonderful it was!—And then Othella would make signs to me to get out, as you preferred to be alone . . . how *sweet* it all was!

OTHELLA. Those days may come back again, Freda. . . . Isn't that so, Paul?

PAUL. O-oh yes . . . !

OTHELLA. (*Goes to help at the table*)

FREDERICK. Don't you think, Paul, that *she* would do something for me?

PAUL. Who?

FREDERICK. Why, Mrs. Kluver. . . .

PAUL. You might try, little Freda; you are not bashful, you know.

OTHELLA. And she has plenty of money.

FREDERICK. I *have* written to her several times.

. . .

PAUL. (*Laughing*) Damned if I didn't think so!

OTHELLA. Freda writes to everybody everywhere! Haven't you also written to the Empress of Russia?

FREDERICK. I did once . . . but she never answered.

PAUL. But Mrs. Kluver?

$$2 \times 2 = 5$$

FREDERICK. She sent me fifty once and twenty-five another time.

OTHELLA. She's a dear anyhow!— How about having supper?

PAUL. Yes, let's eat! Your arm, Miss . . .
(*They all sit down*) How finely you have arranged it!

OTHELLA. Yes, haven't we?— Your health, poet.

PAUL. Here's to you, the friend of my material body!

OTHELLA. You have no idea how I have been longing for you!

PAUL. Oh, I believe you.

OTHELLA. Aren't you just the least little bit glad that I'm here?

PAUL. On the contrary, I am damnably sorry for it! Let's drink to our calling each other by our last name in future.

OTHELLA. Good! (*They drink*)

FREDERICK. (*Eating with great zest*) Esther ought to see us now. . . .

OTHELLA. What does Esther matter! Now it's *me*!

PAUL. But *she* is the "ideal" woman, little golden-haired one. . . . You are merely flesh and blood.

OTHELLA. Thank Heaven for that!

FREDERICK. (*With a sigh*) I have had a falling-out with Valborg, Paul.

PAUL. Dear me. . . .

OTHELLA. Is she "ideal" too?

PAUL. What has come between you?

FREDERICK. A preacher. . . . She has heard some of his sermons and now she says that I am leading a sinful life and she won't have anything to do with me any longer.

OTHELLA. I suppose she wants the preacher?

FREDERICK. That's it. . . . But I shall take my revenge! I'm going to marry her mother instead. . . . By the Lord in his highest Heaven!

OTHELLA. You are *great*, Freda! Here's to you!

PAUL. But you always said she hated you.

FREDERICK. Oh, that was only because I was such good friends with the daughter. She was jealous. . . . You know women always admire me!

OTHELLA. Has she money?

FREDERICK. Lots! And Valborg won't get one cent dowry!

PAUL. Certainly not! And then you will become father-in-law to the preacher and father to your own fiancée! That's a position you are worthy of!

FREDERICK. Yes, that sounds like a real fairy-tale!

PAUL. That's what it does, Freda! . . . (*He sings*)

$$2 \times 2 = 5$$

Dear friend, take a sip of the wine;
 Lift your head and do not repine.
 Remember, some day, whether rain or shine
 Master Death, plays *his* air
 And closes those eyes,
 Those beautiful eyes
 That turned your head for fair!

OTHELLA. You mean the eyes of the mother-in-law?

PAUL. Of course! . . . (*Singing*) "No wonder you find her so sweet, our little Lisette."

MRS. TRUELSEN. (*Enters with a visiting card*)

PAUL. (*To MRS. TRUELSEN*). . . .

Those pert little, sweet little feet,
 That cheek silky-soft and so sweet
 And that waist small and neat.
 Ah, our ruin's complete
 Those devilish, heavenly women.

Here's to your health, Mrs. Truelsen! Won't you have a glass of wine?

MRS. TRUELSEN. (*Stiffly*) This gentleman rang the bell to my apartment, but it is Mr. Abel he wants.

PAUL. (*Taking the card*) My lawyer . . . wonder what he wants this time of the day. . . . Never mind! Let's grant him an audience.

MRS. TRUELSEN. But. . . .

PAUL. Mrs. Truelsen! I bid you let him enter!

MRS. TRUELSEN. (*Opening the door*) Come in, Mr.

(*The lawyer comes in. The widow goes out*)

PAUL. Good evening, Mr. Attorney! What do you want with me?

THE LAWYER. I beg your pardon . . . I fear I am intruding. . . . But I have just heard. . . .

PAUL. Have I been sentenced? . . . I hope they didn't acquit me!

THE LAWYER. Can't we go. . . .

PAUL. Speak out right here . . . these people are my best friends.

OTHELLA. Good evening, Jacobsen . . . !

THE LAWYER. Ah, now I see that it is Miss Othella. . . . Miss Lustig . . . ! Good evening Miss— (*To PAUL*) Yes, sentence has been pronounced and it amounts to one month's imprisonment on ordinary prison fare.

PAUL. That's fine! Won't you have a glass of wine?

OTHELLA. One month in prison!

FREDERICK. Goodness . . . and on ordinary prison fare!

PAUL. Quiet, children! . . . Won't you take a glass of wine, Mr. Attorney?

THE LAWYER. No, thank you . . . Of course we shall appeal, Mr. Abel . . .

PAUL. Under no circumstances!

THE LAWYER. But surely you know that with this new liberal government they . . .

PAUL. Under no circumstances! Suppose they acquitted me?

THE LAWYER. (*Smiling*) Yes, wouldn't that be a pity. . . . But hadn't we better talk over that matter to-morrow, Mr. Abel?

PAUL. Of course we can do that. . . . But I am as firm as a rock! Don't you really care for a glass of wine?

THE LAWYER. No, thanks, I. . . .

PAUL. But, by George, you *must* drink to my "appointment"! (*Handing him a glass*) Here's luck to you!

THE LAWYER. (*Laughing*) Here's to you . . . And good luck!

PAUL. Thank you . . . Yes, it isn't an honour bestowed on everyone to go to jail.

THE LAWYER. (*Merrily*) No! And a great many people wouldn't appreciate it.

PAUL. No . . . people are so petty.

THE LAWYER. That's so! Well, until to-morrow then, Mr. Abel. . . . (*Bows, and goes towards the door*)

OTHELLA. (*Waves her hand to him*) Good-bye, Jacobsen . . . !

$$2 \times 2 = 5$$

THE LAWYER. Good-bye Miss . . . (*Goes out accompanied by PAUL*)

OTHELLA. A month's imprisonment . . . and just as we had got together again!

FREDERICK. Thank Heaven, *I* have never had any trouble with the police!

(PAUL *comes in*)

OTHELLA. (*Runs over and embraces him*) Take me with you, Paul!

PAUL. Dear lady, unfortunately it is against the regulations!

FREDERICK. I hereby offer to go to jail in your place.

PAUL. That's certainly nice of you, Freda, but remember you have to go and propose to your mother-in-law.

FREDERICK. Oh, she may go to the dickens.

PAUL. Fie, fie, Frederick, do not trifle with the eternal verities! But pour out the wine, children, and wish me luck . . . and then go home to sleep.

OTHELLA. Home . . . !

PAUL. Yes, I want to have a rehearsal of "The Forsaken One."

OTHELLA. Are you going to send your only friends away . . . ?

FREDERICK. Now Othella, Paul wants to rehearse being alone . . .

$$2 \times 2 = 5$$

OTHELLA. (*Embracing PAUL*) Let us stay a little half hour more anyhow . . . only twenty minutes . . . ?

PAUL. All right! But then you will have to leave.

OTHELLA. We promise it! And now for the parting treat! I'm going to play for you . . . *Tannhäuser*.

FREDERICK. As in the beginning of the world!

OTHELLA. You go over on the sofa, Paul! And you, Freda, sit down in the easy-chair! (*Begins to play.*)

FREDERICK *sinks into a chair*. PAUL *stretches out on the sofa*. OTHELLA. *Plays—Looks at PAUL and sees that his eyes are closed—Then she nods to FREDERICK that he is to go out. FREDERICK doesn't want to go but at last goes out softly, looking insulted.*

OTHELLA. (*Continues playing*)

CURTAIN

ACT III

A single cell in the jail—square with yellow-plastered walls and arched ceiling.

To the left two planks built into the wall and serving as chair and table. Above the table a lighted gaslight.

In the background, fastened to the wall with hinges, a bed which in daytime is closed up against the wall and locked. Over the bed, close to the ceiling, a square, grated window, arched at the top. To the right towards the foreground a door with peephole from the corridor outside the cell. In the corner towards the background a washbowl with water-pipe.

Morning.

PAUL. (*In his ordinary clothes, elbows on the table and head resting in his hands. On the table a tin mug. He hums softly*) Ach, Du lieber Augustin, Augustin, Augustin. . . . Well, well, well . . . (*Yawns and stretches himself*)

(*From outside is heard the rattle of a bunch of keys. A key is inserted in the lock, the door half opened and the voice of the jailer is heard from the outside*)

THE JAILER. Breakfast!

PAUL. (*Takes his mug and sticks it out through the half open door; gets it back filled with warm beer and also gets a hunk of pumpernickel, cut into thick slices. Goes back to his seat and starts eating, but without appetite. In a few moments the bunch of keys is once more heard rattling and the jailer comes in followed by a young fellow in prison garb—grey trousers and short jacket, white woolen socks, and slippers, broom and dustpan in hand. The two prisoners look each other over*)

PAUL. That's a new one. . . .

THE JAILER. (*Turning out the gas*) Yes, No. 87 has the belly-ache. . . . The devil only knows from what! (*To the prisoner*) First make the bed and then sweep . . . but get a move on you.

THE PRISONER. (*Whose throat is wound with cotton under a large muffler, gets busy with the bed*)

PAUL. Hasn't an easy-chair arrived for me, Mr. Siverts?

THE JAILER. Yes . . . and to-morrow I suppose you will get a chaise longue and a billiard table! (*Goes out without locking the door*)

THE PRISONER. (*Whispering hoarsely to PAUL*) What've you done?

PAUL. (*Without hesitation*) Forgery.

THE PRISONER. (*Clacking his tongue*) You're it, pal!

$$2 \times 2 = 5$$

PAUL. 'And what've *you* done?

THE PRISONER. Nothing . . . I am here on suspicion.

PAUL. What's the matter with your throat?

THE PRISONER. I have the mumps. . . . Haven't you any "candy" on you?

PAUL. Candy . . . ? Hush! (THE PRISONER gets busy making the bed)

THE JAILER. (*Brings in a big, old-time easy-chair and some letters*) Here's the chair . . . and here's a bunch of letters.

PAUL. Thank you. . . . (*Begins at once opening the letters*)

THE JAILER. (*Sitting down in the chair*) You're too slow, 76!

THE PRISONER. (*Humbly*) All right, Mr. Siverts, I'll hurry up. . . .

THE JAILER. Yes, you'll have to hurry!

THE PRISONER. Very well. . . . (*Finishes making the bed*)

THE JAILER. (*Gets up, closes up the bed and locks it to the wall*) Then the floor, 76 . . . but get a move on you!

THE PRISONER. All right, Mr. Siverts . . . (*Starts sweeping*)

THE JAILER. (*Goes out*)

PAUL. (*Reads some letters*)

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THE PRISONER. (*Sits down in the easy-chair*)
By your leave . . . ?

PAUL. (*Reading*) Help yourself . . .

THE PRISONER. (*Stretches himself*) It's some time since one had such a comfortable seat. . . .

PAUL. (*Laughs at something in the letter*)

THE PRISONER. You must be a blooming aristocrat to have kept your own clothes and to get a chair and letters and chambermaid . . . ?

PAUL. Get up a moment!

THE PRISONER. (*Impudently*) No, I won't!

PAUL. Get up, I say, and I'll show you something. . . .

THE PRISONER. (*Gets up unwillingly*)

PAUL. (*Takes out his penknife and quickly cuts a hole in the cover of the chair*) Look here! (*Pulls out a small parcel from the chair*) Here's chewing tobacco, comrade!

THE PRISONER. (*Clacking his tongue*) Well, I'll be damned!

PAUL. They told me about it in the letter.

THE PRISONER. Give us a jawful.

PAUL. Of course! (*Gives him a chew*) But be sure to hide it!

THE PRISONER. That's the worst thing to do without here. (*Chewing hungrily*) And then women! (*Hides the chew in one of his socks. Then goes to the water-pipe and "telegraphs"*)

$$2 \times 2 = 5$$

PAUL. (*Who also is chewing*) What are you doing?

THE PRISONER. I'm telling the pals that we have "candy." . . . Can't you hear how happy they are? (*Telegraphic reply is heard in the pipe*)

PAUL. Seems to me you are so humble to the jailer, 76 . . .

THE PRISONER. Huh, yes . . . Though I have the mumps I'm not an idiot. . . . I know how to handle them . . . then one gets a bit of sugar with the beer!

PAUL. (*Laughing*) So that's why you are so humble!

THE PRISONER. That's what it is . . . ! but just let me meet that cossack some dark night in the street when he's alone . . . (*Clacks his tongue*) Bing . . . Sun, moon and eleven stars. . . . Joseph's dream and Potiphar will dance right before his eyes.

PAUL. Hush, there he comes!

THE PRISONER. (*Sweeps vigorously*)

THE JAILER. (*Comes in*) Have you finished, 76?

THE PRISONER. Ready, Mr. Siverts . . .

THE JAILER. All right, come along!

THE PRISONER. (*Gathers his things together*)

PAUL. (*Slily*) Have you the toothache, 76? One of your cheeks is swollen.

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THE PRISONER. (*In the same tone*) When a poor fellow has the mumps, comrade. . . .

THE JAILER. No talking!

THE PRISONER. No, Sir. . . .

THE JAILER. Forward, march!

THE PRISONER. Yes, Sir. . . .

THE JAILER. (*Calls out through the door*) Jensen, put 76 in!

JENSEN. (*Outside*) All right.

THE PRISONER. (*Goes out*)

THE JAILER. (*Changing his demeanour entirely*) Well, Mr. Abel, how did we sleep last night?

PAUL. Rotten!

THE JAILER. Again? That's too bad. . . .

PAUL. What sort of an animal is it that stands outside all night coughing and gulping?

THE JAILER. That's old man Eriksen, the night-watch; he has tuberculosis . . . but he wants to stick around a few years longer till he can get his full pension.

PAUL. I'm sure he won't live that long!

THE JAILER. No, I suppose he'll die . . . but now you can make up for it during the day in your easy-chair.

PAUL. (*Shakes himself and settles himself more comfortably in the chair*) You bet your life I shall! It's a good one!

THE JAILER. Who sent it to you? A girl, eh?

$$2 \times 2 = 5$$

PAUL. (*Nods*) Yes. . . !

THE JAILER. But you haven't eaten anything, Mr. Abel. . . .

PAUL. (*Points to his throat*) It won't go down any further than that.

THE JAILER. Wash it down with the beer!

PAUL. Oh, Siverts, I had such a lovely dream last night about fried chicken!

THE JAILER. Well, dreaming about it won't make you fat!

PAUL. *Couldn't* you get me a chicken, eh? . . . with a lot of parsley.

THE JAILER. (*Laughs*) Ha, ha!

PAUL. Just a little one, Siverts?

THE JAILER. Where the devil would I get *that* from, man?— But as I have told you before, Mr. Abel, why do you write that kind of stuff that you have to go to jail for? A man with your talent must be able to write whatever he wants to and make money out of it!

PAUL. Yes, but I am a lyric poet, Siverts.

THE JAILER. Yes, that's what you are! And you're married, too, they tell me.

PAUL. Ye-es, in a way. . . .

THE JAILER. Have you any children?

PAUL. Eleven. . . .

THE JAILER. The devil you have! And you look so innocent.

$$2 \times 2 = 5$$

PAUL. But I did not have all of them with the same wife.

THE JAILER. No-o, I didn't think you did . . . I have been married twice myself and have seven children— But now I am a widower, glory be.

PAUL. Both *my* wives are still alive.

THE JAILER. Then you are a bigamist!

PAUL. Hush! Don't talk about it.

THE JAILER. No, I shan't tell any one. . . .

PAUL. Tell me, Siverts, what's really your opinion about women?

THE JAILER. That depends largely upon what you happen to get hold of, Mr. Abel! Women are peculiar birds; they aren't like us folks at all. . . .

PAUL. No, that's the trouble with marriage, Siverts, that one has to be of a different sex! How were *your* two wives?

THE JAILER. The first was a little, round one, who cried if she happened to lose a needle. . . . The other one was a tall, three-cornered devil, who would fight whenever she felt that way . . . I have noticed that number two always is the worse. . . . It's peculiar that one hasn't sense enough to keep from getting mixed up again, when one has been lucky enough to escape with one's life the first round.

PAUL. Yes, and at that some people marry three times, Siverts.

$$2 \times 2 = 5$$

THE JAILER. Yes, it must be a sort of fever. . . .
How were *your* two?

PAUL. One was hunchbacked and redhaired. . . .
The other one was deaf and dumb and with wooden legs.

THE JAILER. Both legs?

PAUL. Yes, both legs!

THE JAILER. Ha, ha, ha! I must admire you,
Mr. Abel, on account of your fine humour.

PAUL. Same to you, Siverts!

THE JAILER. Aw, me . . . I am only a common
person! But *you* are the fine, well-bred gentleman,
who has condescended to have a bit of fun with a
fellow like me. That's what cheers me up!

PAUL. I am glad of that. . . .

THE JAILER. Yes, it's like a real comic show for
us when a man like you comes in here. The other
scarecrows just keep on telling us that they are
innocent and only are here "on suspicion." . . .
Why, I wish that *you* were here for life, Mr. Abel!

PAUL. Oh, that is very kind of you, Siverts, but
don't you think that I should lose my good spirits
in that case?

THE JAILER. (*Eagerly*) Well, I'll tell you that
when I had her, the tall, three-cornered one, and she
was mad, I often retired to an empty cell with my
pipe—then she might carry on as much as she liked!
Oh, by the way, while I remember it. Would you

$$2 \times 2 = 5$$

mind my letting Jensen in to pay you a visit?

PAUL. Jensen? Who is he?

THE JAILER. That's the jailer over on the other side. . . . I have spoken of you to him so much that he wants to see you too. . . . They all want to for that matter!

PAUL. Well, I really should like to have a nap now in my new chair, Siverts . . . Is Jensen as pleasant as you are?

THE JAILER. No, he isn't. . . . He is moody and does not like at all to be here, so it would really do him a lot of good to have a talk with you.

PAUL. Oh, well, then let him come in!

THE JAILER. May I?

PAUL. Yes . . .

THE JAILER. (*At the door*) Jensen . . . Pst, Jensen! You may come in and see the poet now! (*Turns around*) Here he is!

JENSEN. (*Comes in*)

THE JAILER. This is Jensen . . . I'll go on guard now, Jensen, while you have your say. . . . (*Goes out*)

PAUL. Good morning, Mr. Jensen . . . step over here. . . .

JENSEN. Siverts has told me that one might talk plainly to you, Mr. Poet, about one's troubles. . . .

PAUL. Certainly. . . . Well, what's on your mind?

$$2 \times 2 = 5$$

JENSEN. I was born out in the country, Mr. Poet, and as such it is so terribly unpleasant for me to live in town all my life. . . .

PAUL. I can well understand that. . . . How long have you lived here?

JENSEN. Sixteen years. . . . But to fuss around a couple of horses out in the country and curry and water them, like when I worked for Pastor Skovbo at Nordlunde. . . . When the sun rises and the birds begin to twitter . . . that's another matter.

PAUL. But why did you take this job then, Jensen?

JENSEN. Well, you see, Mr. Poet, I came to town to serve in the army and then I got in trouble with a girl in a restaurant . . . and then we had to get married.

PAUL. I see!

JENSEN. And of course, Mr. Poet, wife and children have to eat; and when you're fixed that way you have to take whatever you can get. . . . And then the Captain of my company got this job for me, for I have always been reliable. . . . And now I have gone here sixteen years. . . . But it is a terrible life, Mr. Poet; much worse than for the prisoners, for most of them get out again. . . .

PAUL. That's so, my dear Jensen, but what is it you want me to do for you about it?

$$2 \times 2 = 5$$

JENSEN. Well, I thought I might ask you . . . if you don't mind it. . . .

PAUL. Speak up . . . if I can do anything for you I shall be glad to.

JENSEN. Many thanks, Mr. Poet. . . ! It's this: I thought perhaps you might know some family in need of a reliable man as coachman—I should of course prefer it to be out in the country where I belong—a married coachman—I love horses and am good to them, so perhaps . . .

PAUL. I shall do that with pleasure. . . . It isn't at all impossible that I can get you such a place.

JENSEN. Many thanks, Mr. Poet . . . ! Now I can go about in here a bit more hopefully! My name is Marius Jensen . . . Jailer Marius Jensen, and when you write me here to the institution, then . . .

THE JAILER. (*Coming in quickly*) The pastor is coming . . . you must get out of here, Jensen!

JENSEN. All right. . . . Good-bye, Mr. Poet, and thank you once more. . . . (*Goes out*)

PAUL. Good-bye, Jensen. . . .

THE JAILER. The pastor is here. . . .

PAUL. So I hear. . . . What does that insistent person want here again? I shall never get my nap now.

THE JAILER. You ought to repent right away,

$$2 \times 2 = 5$$

Mr. Abel, then he does not remain so long.

PAUL. You can bet your life I shall repent!

THE JAILER. (*Straightens up*) There he is!
(*The PASTOR comes in, the JAILER goes out*)

THE PASTOR. How-do-you-do, Mr. Paul Abel . . . !
(*PAUL bows silently*) Aha, I see we have a grand-
father's chair here! (*Sits down in it and makes him-
self comfortable*)

PAUL. (*Ironically*) Won't you sit down, Mr. Pastor?

THE PASTOR. (*Not understanding the irony*)
Thank you . . . Of course they are not so partic-
ular here with prisoners of Mr. Abel's kind; they
are treated leniently.

PAUL. Yes. (*Pause*)

THE PASTOR. I saw you in church last Sun-
day. . . .

PAUL. Yes.

THE PASTOR. You wanted to see what the divine
service would look like in here?

PAUL. Yes . . . and I wanted to hear you
preach.

THE PASTOR. I suppose you didn't like it?

PAUL. No.

THE PASTOR. (*Smiling*) I thought so. (*Pause*)
How does life in here agree with you?

PAUL. Thanks, excellently.

THE PASTOR. I don't suppose your stay here

$$2 \times 2 = 5$$

will cause any change in your literary ideas?

PAUL. Hardly.

THE PASTOR. According to *your* ideas you probably believe you have been treated unjustly?

PAUL. Oh, I don't know . . .

THE PASTOR. Tell me, my dear friend, what do you really expect to accomplish by writing the way you do?

PAUL. I want to show people as they *really* are.

THE PASTOR. Thanks, but we know that already.

PAUL. I haven't any strong impression that you do.

THE PASTOR. Don't you really think that you would benefit "us people" and the world more by holding some ideal or other before us? By pointing out to us according to the best of your ability how we *ought* to be?

PAUL. I am not wise enough for that.

THE PASTOR. (*Delicately*) Or foolish enough!

PAUL. Ye-es, you might perhaps say that.

THE PASTOR. Can you support yourself by your literary activities?

PAUL. No.

THE PASTOR. Why don't you select a profession? You are a graduate of the University?

PAUL. Yes, Bachelor of Philosophy.

THE PASTOR. Well, why don't you go into the learned professions . . . to earn your living?

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PAUL. I'm too old.

THE PASTOR. How old are you?

PAUL. Two hundred and forty-eight years.
(THE PASTOR *looks up surprised*. PAUL *goes over to him quietly; buttonholes him and lifts him from the chair—and sits down in it himself*) And how old are you, Mr. Pastor?

THE PASTOR. (*Confused*) Thirty-eight. . . .

PAUL. And your way of making a living suits you?

THE PASTOR. (*Protesting*) But, Mr. Abel, I . . .

PAUL. Do you have late dinner?

THE PASTOR. Mr. . . .

PAUL. Do you use woollen underwear?

THE PASTOR. Mr. Abel, I must . . .

PAUL. (*Getting a sudden inspiration*) I wonder if it's you who are engaged to Valborg Swanshield?

THE PASTOR. (*Taken by surprise*) How do you know?

PAUL. I am clairvoyant!— She has oodles of money, hasn't she?

THE PASTOR. Mr. Abel, I must insist . . .

PAUL. (*Calmly*) No, *now* it is my turn, Mr. Pastor, to be an indiscreet interviewer! Have your parents been married several times? Does your mother wear patent leather shoes? Does your father like fresh lobster or does he prefer it canned?

$$2 \times 2 = 5$$

THE PASTOR. (*Pale*) I come here in the course of my official duties, Mr. Abel, and I protest most vigorously against your incredible manner of . . .

THE JAILER. Excuse me, Mr. Pastor . . . but here is a gentleman who has permission from the inspector to see Mr. Abel. . . .

THE PASTOR. Well, *I* have finished. . . . (*Goes out quickly and outside the door runs into HAMANN*)

HAMANN. I am Mr. Thomas Hamann. . . .

THE PASTOR. And I am the prison clergyman. . . . (*Goes away*)

PAUL. (*Gets up in surprise*) My father-in-law . . . ! You here! I hope it is merely on suspicion!

THE JAILER. Here you are, sir. . . . I shall call you when the fifteen minutes are up. . . . (*Goes out*)

HAMANN. (*Who has a decoration in his button-hole—a trifle uncertain*) Good morning, dear Paul. . . .

PAUL. (*Shakes hands with him—merrily*) Good morning and welcome, sir! How in the world have you managed to get into this Chinese puzzle?

HAMANN. I have obtained the special permission of the Cabinet Minister. . . . And you, dear friend, have retained your good spirits, I am happy to hear.

PAUL. Well, it's no use taking life any other way.

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HAMANN. You're right in that . . . but unfortunately so few people realize it—I bring you the warmest regards from my wife and daughter.

PAUL. Many thanks! Please remember me to them in return— My, but you look young and sprightly.

HAMANN. Yes, isn't that so? But a wave of rejuvenation has spread all over the country, Paul Abel!

PAUL. Yes, I've heard that you have become a "liberal"— And you have received a decoration! All that of course goes together.

HAMANN. (*Fingering his decoration*) On account of twenty-five years, faithful service, that is.

PAUL. And nothing came of the resignation you threatened to send in?

HAMANN. No, thank God I still submit to the law of evolution! You live quite comfortably here.

PAUL. Oh, yes. . . .

HAMANN. Did I bring you the regards of the ladies? I was to do that.

PAUL. Thanks, and I asked to be remembered to them in turn.

HAMANN. (*Confused*) Ah, yes, I remember now. . . . And you have an easy-chair! Do they have one like that in all the . . . rooms?

PAUL. I don't know. . . . You see we haven't

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much chance for sociability. . . . This isn't exactly the place for social gatherings.

HAMANN. No-o, ha, ha! Perhaps it has been specially sent you by our new liberal government in order to soften somewhat your scandalous sentence.

PAUL. No, my friend Gerhard Konik sent it to me.

HAMANN. Oh, the caricaturist. . . . He's a fine fellow!

PAUL. Yes.

HAMANN. I saw him on the street the other day.

PAUL. Without his wife?

HAMANN. No, no, the idea! Of course they are a bit ridiculous, those two, with their old-time faithfulness . . . but what the devil, ha, ha!

PAUL. No, what the hell, hee-hee!

HAMANN. But one ought to *remain* together . . . for the sake of the example.

PAUL. But they are doing that. But then of course they are merely a couple of caricaturists.

HAMANN. (*Without comprehension*) Yes—And all three of us were agreed in condemning your incarceration here!

PAUL. When one has sinned against the laws, Mr. Hamann, one must suffer punishment.

HAMANN. Quite true, quite true, my dear fellow! But a literary man should not be treated like a bur-

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glar or a brawler . . . more especially a literary man of *your* talent!

PAUL. When one disobeys the laws, then . . .

HAMANN. Disobey, disobey. . . . What does it mean! After all is said and done, it is this "disobedience" that produces all progress!

PAUL. I see that you have become a real anarchist!

HAMANN. I've always been that!

PAUL. Is that really so?

HAMANN. Yes, in my heart of hearts!

PAUL. Well, that may be. . . . But tell me how this . . . this transformation really happened?

HAMANN. (*Naïvely*) It was my wife who . . . You know how energetic Maria is. . . . And then my anniversary was about due. . . . And then suddenly we understood how the old, conservative government had failed and we resolutely turned our backs on it.

PAUL. And now you feel quite free?

HAMANN. Perfectly!— Do you remember the vile abuse of your so shamefully misjudged book in "The Conservative"?

PAUL. Yes, it was blasting.

HAMANN. The feelings in our home are so changed that we no longer subscribe to that dirty sheet, which I have taken practically ever since I was

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confirmed. . . . And now we subscribe to "The Liberal."

PAUL. Ahem . . . I am really sorry about that.

HAMANN. (*Startled*) What do you mean . . . ?

PAUL. Well, I lose a subscriber by it.

HAMANN. A subscriber? I don't understand. . . .

PAUL. (*Seriously*) Well, you see, in my heart of hearts I have always been a reactionary. . . .

HAMANN. (*Laughs loudly*) Ha, ha, ha! What a splendid wit you have!

PAUL. (*Seriously*) I beg your pardon, Mr. Hamann. . . . I am quite serious! I feel that the new ways may be all right but not until they become old and have proven practical!

HAMANN. (*Laughing*) Didn't I say this was a sample of your excellent wit? You are merely quoting one of my old stupidities!

PAUL. (*Still serious*) Oh, it was you who used to say it! I thought it was Napoleon Bonaparte . . . *after* he became emperor— However, this was what I was going to tell you: My old protector, Mrs. Kluver, has offered me the post as editor-in-chief of "The Conservative." . . . She is one of the biggest shareholders . . . and I have accepted her offer.

HAMANN. (*With satisfaction*) I had heard something about it. (*With fervor*) To think that

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you betray your convictions to such an extent!

PAUL. Yes, the truth will prevail!

HAMANN. (*Beginning to get puzzled*) The truth? Which truth?

PAUL. That sooner or later one gives in to what is deepest in one's heart of hearts.

HAMANN. Yes. . . . Yes, of course . . . ! Does that post pay you well?

PAUL. What post?

HAMANN. As editor.

PAUL. Yes, very nicely; 7,000 crowns a year and bonus.

HAMANN. 7,000 crowns for a man's convictions . . . ! Nothing to say against that.

PAUL. No, don't you think so?

HAMANN. Of course I do! Even though people, of course, will talk. . . . And you with your modern views can do so much good in that position; you can fill the old wine-bottles with fresh blood, ha, ha!

PAUL. Yes, isn't that so?

HAMANN. To be sure! I congratulate you heartily, dear friend! My wife and daughter will be glad to know that the rumour was right.

PAUL. Where did you hear the rumour?

HAMANN. I saw it in some newspaper, and then my womenfolk felt that I ought to go to see you right away. . . . But personally I am a bit sorry,

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dear Paul, that we no longer belong to the same political party.

PAUL. We never did, because formerly *you* stood on the foundation of truth. . . .

HAMANN. (*With emphasis*) On the foundation of truth? I did not stand there till *now*, Paul Abel?

PAUL. Maybe so. . . . But then I stand there *too*. . . . Don't you understand *that*?

HAMANN. No, because . . . the truth is . . .

PAUL. The truth is only one thing. . . .

HAMANN. Ye-es, yes! But we stand. . . .

PAUL. (*With fervor*) Certainly! But the truth is what is deepest in our heart of hearts! You will not deny that?

HAMANN. No, of course not. . . . By no means. . . ! (*Stupidly*) Allow me to sit down for a moment? (*Sits down in the easy-chair*)

THE JAILER. (*Comes in*) The fifteen minutes are up.

HAMANN. (*Jumps up frightened*) But, my dear Paul Abel, we haven't talked at all about what the ladies told me to. . . .

PAUL. Just two minutes more, Siverts. . . .
(THE JAILER *goes out*)

PAUL. Is it about Esther, Mr. Hamann?

HAMANN. (*Joyfully*) Yes, that's just the gist

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of the matter! And to think, that you could guess it!

PAUL. (*Deeply serious*) What the Gods have put asunder, Sir Knight, let no man join together!

HAMANN. Of course not, but . . . such a little disagreement. . . .

PAUL. Impossible! In the position I am to fill in the future I cannot be married to the daughter of a Kropotkin . . . an anarchist! But I want to ask you a favour . . .

HAMANN. (*Full of expectation*) With great pleasure . . . !

PAUL. Let's call each other Thomas and Paul?

HAMANN. (*Hesitating*) Why, er-er. . . .

PAUL. Yes, because now there is nothing to risk by it as we are not related any longer, nor do we belong to the same political party. . . . Isn't that true?

HAMANN. (*Feeling foolish*) No. . . .

PAUL. (*Squeezes his hand*) Thank you . . . from the bottom of my heart! You may come in now, Siverts.

THE JAILER. (*Comes in*)

PAUL. Good-bye, dear Thomas, and thanks for your kind visit!

HAMANN. But . . . the ladies. . . .

PAUL. Good-bye, good-bye, dear Thomas! (*To*
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THE JAILER) Please let the gentleman out. . . .

THE JAILER. (*Guiding the CHIEF CLERK. In the doorway*) Jensen, please deliver this gentleman to Simonsen!

JENSEN. (*Outside*) Right you are. . . .

PAUL. (*Sinks into the easy-chair, laughing*)

CURTAIN

ACT IV

PAUL ABEL'S *bachelor apartment—forenoon.*
OTHELLA *sitting at the piano playing Tannhäuser*
HUGO JÖRGENSEN, *in a cycling suit, is lying on the*
chaise longue. He is puffing cigarettes and in front
of him is a smoking-table with whisky and soda.

JÖRGENSEN. What the devil is that ding-donging
Tella. . . . Can't you play something decent? . . .
I am used to something better from the racetracks.

OTHELLA. (*Changes into an operetta tune*)

JÖRGENSEN. Of course! Some sense to *that*!

OTHELLA. (*Keeps on playing*)

JÖRGENSEN. I hope nobody runs away with my
steed; I left it in the lower hall!

OTHELLA. (*Playing*) Oh no, this is a respect-
able house. . . .

JÖRGENSEN. Do me the favour anyhow to go
down and see, will you . . . ?

OTHELLA. All right . . . (*Goes out through the*
hall)

JÖRGENSEN. (*Yawns*)

MRS. TRUELSEN. (*Comes in from her apartment*
with some flowers—stops) Ahem . . . !

JÖRGENSEN. (*Nods*) Hello, old lady!

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MRS. TRUELSEN. (*Gazes at him, enraged*)

JÖRGENSEN. Flowers for Tella, eh . . . ?

OTHELLA. (*Is heard humming out in the hall*)

MRS. TRUELSEN. (*Goes out after a silent struggle with herself*)

JÖRGENSEN. By-by, old lady . . . ! Peaceful old ghost. . . .

OTHELLA. (*Comes in*) Of course your bicycle was there. . . . And in any case it was locked. . . . ! (*On her knees beside the chaise longue*) Oh, Hugo, you have no idea how I have longed for you!

JÖRGENSEN. (*Patting her hair indifferently*)

OTHELLA. Aren't you a bit glad that you have me back again?

JÖRGENSEN. Of course!

OTHELLA. Kiss me!

JÖRGENSEN. There you are. . . .

OTHELLA. You're right out of the barrel, you are!

JÖRGENSEN. Whose is this wigwam anyhow that we're meeting in, Tella?

OTHELLA. It's my brother's; I've told you already.

JÖRGENSEN. Well! But the card on the door reads "Paul Abel."

OTHELLA. (*Without hesitating*) Yes, for he is only my half-brother.

JÖRGENSEN. Of course! But suppose he came?

OTHELLA. But he isn't coming . . . ! He is

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away on a recreation trip. You see, he is a poet.
. . . Don't you know the name?

JÖRGENSEN. I don't know all the bums that write. . . .

OTHELLA. But I expect him this afternoon . . . He telegraphed me from Berlin. . . . So you have to go immediately after lunch.

JÖRGENSEN. Of course; you cannot have twins.

. . .

OTHELLA. (*Laughs loudly*) . . . Was there much fun in Paris?

JÖRGENSEN. I finished badly. . . .

OTHELLA. Yes, I saw that in the papers. . . . You have no idea how sorry I was for you! How did it happen?

JÖRGENSEN. Got a puncture at the last turn. . . . So both Mullertz and Torquay passed me.

OTHELLA. Weren't you furious?

JÖRGENSEN. Of course!

OTHELLA. Oh, you're grand when you are furious! But why haven't you written me at all?

JÖRGENSEN. When you are training and want to get along you don't think of women or liquor. . . .

OTHELLA. But now you're going to stay home a long while, aren't you?

JÖRGENSEN. Three months. . . . Fix me a whisky and soda.

OTHELLA. (*Fixing the drink*) And so I shall have you that long!

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JÖRGENSEN. Of course!— What have you been doing while I was away?

OTHELLA. I have been sitting home sewing and longing so terribly for you! See how thin I have become! (*Stretching out an arm to him*)
Feel. . . .

JÖRGENSEN. (*Feeling her arm*) I have felt thinner ones. . . .

OTHELLA. (*Pulling his ear*) Rascal!

JÖRGENSEN. Here, here!

OTHELLA. Where are we going to meet when my brother returns . . . ? I can't keep on having you here then. . . . And at *my* house you know auntie sits. . . .

JÖRGENSEN. I have my old rooms out in the suburbs.

OTHELLA. Oh, Hugo, no man can understand what a woman suffers, when the only one she loves leaves her time after time! She does not feel sure of him when there are so many, many miles between them.

JÖRGENSEN. Of course you women are to be depended on more, eh?

OTHELLA. I swear, Hugo, that I have been faithful to you! (*A key is heard in the hall door*)

JÖRGENSEN. Someone is coming.

OTHELLA. Oh, that's only Mrs. Truelsen. . . .
Hugo you're not as glad as I am because we are

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together again! Sometimes I have sat and cried with longing for you of an evening . . . Have you done that too?

JÖRGENSEN. Of course!

PAUL. (*Comes in from the hall— Sees the couple and stops*) Beg your pardon, I am afraid I am intruding. . .

OTHELLA. Paul! Is it you? This early! Welcome . . . ! (*Embracing him*)

PAUL. (*Frees himself quietly*)

OTHELLA. This is my cousin, the well-known cyclist, Hugo Jörgensen. . . . He has just returned from the races in Paris, as you no doubt have read in the papers. . . .

PAUL. (*Doesn't reply*)

JÖRGENSEN. (*Somewhat at sea*) Hugo Jörgensen, yes. . . . Perhaps the gentleman is Tella's brother, Paul Abel . . . ? So we're slightly related. . . .

OTHELLA. Yes, that's to say. . . . Oh yes, that's Paul Abel. . . .

PAUL. (*Stands quietly enjoying the situation without replying*)

JÖRGENSEN. (*Plucking up courage*) Silence . . . ! To be sure. Of course it's easily understood. Nothing but lies! I've had to do with women before to-day. . . . You too, I suppose?

OTHELLA. Paul, you mustn't believe anything

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bad about me, I. . . . (*Sobs*) Oh, I know appearances are against me. . . . !

JÖRGENSEN. (*Shrugging his shoulders*) The lady uses a woman's weapons. . . .

PAUL. (*Remains silent*)

JÖRGENSEN. (*Bows*) Well-bred gent to deal with. . . . I am honoured! Presumably deaf and dumb? Poet. . . . Only expresses himself through his pen! But it's your own private home, Mr. Abel; I therefore leave you the lady and the battlefield. . . . (*Takes his cap*) G'bye . . . gents only use spiritual weapons! G'bye, Tella! 147 West St. 4th floor, you know. . . . I keep open house as usual, of course, after due notice. . . . Yours truly! (*Goes out. PAUL bursts out laughing*)

OTHELLA. (*Getting courage*) Yes, what d'ye say, Paul? Hee-hee! Isn't he great?

PAUL. Insanely!

OTHELLA. You're not angry with me because . . .

PAUL. Not in the least! For he must be irresistible! But for that reason you ought to get your things together and follow him.

OTHELLO. Then you're mad with me after all, Paul?

PAUL. Not at all, my dear Othella; it takes more than that! But do as I told you.

OTHELLA. (*Shyly*) Yes. . . . But, oh Paul, I

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had so looked forward to your coming home!

PAUL. Of course! I think your clothes are hanging in the hall. . . .

OTHELLA. Don't you want me to tidy up a bit in here before I go?

PAUL. No thanks. . . .

OTHELLA. And I was going to play so nicely for you. . . !

PAUL. (*Still calmly*) Go on now, little Miss Lustig. . . .

OTHELLA. All right, if you insist. . . . (*Goes towards the hall*) Do you know that Freda is engaged to his widow-lady?

PAUL. Yes, he wrote and told me.

OTHELLA. He hasn't been here since, but I met him on the street the other day and he pretended he didn't know me. . . . He has become so aristocratic!

PAUL. Your coat is hanging on the hook to the right. . . .

OTHELLA. Yes. . . . (*Goes out and comes back with hat and coat*) When may I come to see you again, Paul?

PAUL. I think we had better say: never, little Othella.

OTHELLA. You think so . . . ? (*Puts on her hat*) How have you been anyhow?

PAUL. Fine.

OTHELLA. Thanks for your letters.

PAUL. Same to you. . . . Can I help you?
(*Helps her with her coat*)

OTHELLA. (*Sobs*) Oh, Paul. . . .

PAUL. No weeping. . . !

OTHELLA. All right. . . .

PAUL. That's it. . . . And here are the gloves.

OTHELLA. Thanks. . . . (*Takes a powder puff from her pocket and powders*) I can't go on the street looking like a cry-baby.

PAUL. No, I suppose not. . . .

OTHELLA. Let me play something from *Tannhäuser* for you . . . for the last time?

PAUL. No thanks, little Othella. . . .

OTHELLA. Well, good-bye then. . . .

PAUL. Well, good-bye. . . . And be good to yourself!

OTHELLA. Thank you. . . . (*Embracing him*) Ah, Paul, you're the noblest gentleman I have ever known!

PAUL. Well, you must go now. . . .

OTHELLA. Yes. . . . (*Goes out suddenly and quickly*)

PAUL. It's too bad—the poor kid . . . ! But to-morrow she'll once more be Othella the golden-haired! (*Goes over and presses the electric button to Mrs. TRUELSEN'S apartment— As no one comes he opens the door and calls*) Mrs. Truelsen!

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MRS. TRUELSEN. (*Comes in, quite flustered*) Almighty Heaven, is it *you*, Mr. Abel?

PAUL. (*Smiling*) Yes.

MRS. TRUELSEN. But you wrote that you were not to be here until the afternoon! And look at the way the place looks! I have a bunch of flowers for you. (*Goes out and returns with the flowers*) Here you are . . . and God bless you!

PAUL. Same to you, Mrs. Truelsen!— But you seem so feverish. . . !

MRS. TRUELSEN. (*Busy fixing up the room*) Where are the others?

PAUL. Which others?

MRS. TRUELSEN. She, Lustig . . . and that man!

PAUL. Gone!

MRS. TRUELSEN. Gone?

PAUL. Yes. . . . Gone on their beautiful legs down the stairs, out on the street and away. . . . But try to compose yourself a bit, dear Mrs. Truelsen!

MRS. TRUELSEN. I *can't*! (*Bursts out*) You have no idea how I have suffered during this miserable month, Mr. Abel! She has led me around by the nose! I haven't had any peace at all in my own house. I have thought of police and of suicide! I've been ready to run away from the ticket agency and all. . . . You menfolks have no idea how mean we women can be to one another!

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PAUL. But now the trouble is over, little Mrs. Truelsen. . . . Miss Lustig has moved to other hunting grounds.

MRS. TRUELSEN. Huh, that's what you said last time!

PAUL. Yes, but this time it is the grim truth.

MRS. TRUELSEN. Well, then someone else will come, now you have been . . . a . . . widower so long.

PAUL. (*Smiling*) No . . . at least not for the present. This afternoon I'm going out in the country to stay a couple of weeks to drink sweet milk and eat fresh air.

MRS. TRUELSEN. Are you going to rush away again immediately, Mr. Abel! I had looked forward so much to making things comfortable for you! (*Suddenly*) And it got much worse when she dragged that fellow in here, that cyclist! Didn't you get my letter? I mailed it last night.

PAUL. No.

MRS. TRUELSEN. What have you done with him? Have you killed him?

PAUL. Yes . . . and stuck him up in the chimney; we don't have to use it for a while anyhow.

MRS. TRUELSEN. There he would lie on the chaise longue, stretching out his disgusting legs. . . .

PAUL. Oh well, he's gone away on them now.

MRS. TRUELSEN. And she would dance around

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him like a peacock and fill him with your whisky and your cigars, and . . . I saw it all through the keyhole and . . . but now we won't talk any more about *that!*

PAUL. No . . . that's agreed!

MRS. TRUELSEN. Will you have some lunch?

PAUL. You can bet I will! I haven't tasted real food since my . . . funeral!

MRS. TRUELSEN. The bell's ringing! (*Goes out and comes back soon after with GERHARD KONIK*) There he is, Mr. Konik! But think of it, he is going away again this afternoon! Well, I must go out and get the lunch! (*Goes out*)

PAUL. Good morning, dear Gerhard! You see I have come back to life!

KONIK. (*Deeply serious and depressed*) I congratulate you on your resurrection, dear friend. . . .

PAUL. Thank you. . . ! And thanks for the chair! You can't imagine how beautifully I slept in it. . . . And the dreams I had! And the chewing tobacco, oh my! That was an original idea. What joy it caused all over the "sanitorium"!—But where is your sister-in-arms?

KONIK. (*Bending his head*) My sister-in-arms?

PAUL. Yes, your wife? You look so odd. . . . She isn't sick?

KONIK. I don't know. . . .

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PAUL. (*Seizes his arm. Frightened*) What's the matter man? You don't know?

KONIK. No. . . . Lena and I haven't anything to do with each other any more. . . .

PAUL. (*Laughing*) Impossible! Hell would sooner freeze over, as my brother-in-law, Freda, used to say!

KONIK. Lena has left me. . . .

PAUL. (*Laughing*) That's a lie!

KONIK. She's run away with a real painter. . . .

PAUL. Lies! I don't believe them!

KONIK. I wasn't "serious" enough for her. . . .

PAUL. (*Shaking him*) You lie, Gerhard!

KONIK. And of course I didn't want to stand in the way of her happiness. . . .

PAUL. (*Confused*) But, man, you can't live without your wife, you can't work, you can't draw. . . .

KONIK. Yes, I *can* draw. . . . Let me show you. . . . (*Takes out a sketchbook*) Here you see me *without* Lena. . . . (*PAUL bursts out in exuberant laughter. MRS. KONIK has come in in the meantime from MRS. TRUELSEN'S apartment with a bunch of flowers. Behind her peeps the widow TRUELSEN. Now the two of them likewise burst into laughter. MRS. TRUELSEN goes out*)

PAUL. (*Runs over and embraces MRS. KONIK*) I knew it all the time! Nevertheless it was as if the
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earth sank from beneath my feet! For I had no longer anything to believe in!

MRS. KONIK. (*Pats his cheek*) Yes, it was almost a shame to . . .

KONIK. (*Pulls them apart*) Here, here. . . . Stop it, Lena. He is one of those men women remain sticking to! You swallowed my story anyhow, Paul!

PAUL. Yes, but I didn't *believe* it! Didn't I say all the time that it was a lie?

MRS. KONIK. Yes . . . and I thank you for that! (*Hands him the flowers*) I wish you welcome back from the lower world!

PAUL. Thanks, dear Madam. . . . May I kiss her, Gerhard?

KONIK. No!

PAUL. (*Kissing Mrs. KONIK*) Thank you. . . . But tell me, dear friend, how *could* you draw that thing when she wasn't away from you?

KONIK. But she *was* away, the old hen!

MRS. KONIK. (*Laughing*) You see, we wanted to try how it would be to be parted, so one day I went over to Helsingborg with my sister. . . .

KONIK. And while I was eating my lunch I started drawing. . . .

MRS. KONIK. He was green that evening when I returned. . . . And he gave me the devil! And he came near crying!

KONIK. Nonsense!

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PAUL. But what about the school?

KONIK. Oh, we gave that up!

MRS. KONIK. (*Laughing*) You know that it was no use. . . .

PAUL. Gerhard, come to my arms! You can't imagine how it tortured me, that you were going to sell your soul that way.

MRS. KONIK. It was a pity, Paul; but then there were the children, you see. . . .

KONIK. Those little scourges of the Lord, yes. . . . But they will get along all right . . . with such a mother!

MRS. KONIK. (*Standing close to him*) They *must* get along so that you may work in peace. . . . Paul, he has started a big picture.

PAUL. A "serious" one?

KONIK. Yes! And this time it is a painting, Paul! In colours, my boy. A big painting! Listen to this: In the center of the canvas stands a tremendous dish. . . . From everywhere people come hurrying, eyes like saucers and large spoons in their hands. . . . People of all classes and all kinds. . . . Noblemen, clergymen, shopkeepers, peasants and workingmen. . . . They claw and tear at each other to get there first. . . . Some are already sitting on the edge of the dish kicking with their legs and hitting about them with their spoons to keep the competitors away. . . . But they keep on com-

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ing. . . . A big, interminable mass of people reaching far out onto the horizon. . . . A whirl of spoons, arms and gaping mouths. . . . Some yelling, screaming and roaring. Others sneaking silently along, smooth and slippery, trying to wedge in where there is the least little opening. . . . Men, women, children; old men too. Young and old, the entire country! And on the dish is printed in large, beautiful and "serious" letters: For The Salvation Of The Fatherland! For they all want to eat from the noblest motives—

But above the porridge-dish and the mass of humanity, in a grandfather-chair on a little white cloud, and surrounded by angels, sits the good old, long-bearded God and He laughs so that He has to hold His stomach. . . . What do you think of it, Paul? It's good, eh? And I think I can paint it now since I came near succumbing to the temptation myself!

PAUL. (*With emotion*) Gerhard, my dear friend, in the future you shall be my pillar of fire in the desert!

KONIK. Oh, I'm sure you can find your way all right. . . . You have been able to do it so far. It's you who have put fire into me. . . . I want to go to jail too! . . . By the way, how did you get along out at the "institution"? Don't let's talk about me all the time!

$$2 \times 2 = 5$$

PAUL. I got along splendidly out there!

KONIK. And do you think it has improved you?

PAUL. Oh, certainly!

MRS. KONIK. How did you sleep at night, Paul?

PAUL. Badly. . . . And just think of it, the jailer came to take my trousers away every night for fear I might run away.

KONIK. Seems to me one could run away better without them. . . .

MRS. KONIK. And how was the food?

PAUL. Splendid! I shall taste it till the day of my death!

MRS. KONIK. What did they give you to eat?

PAUL. Dry ryebread and warm beer for breakfast; dry ryebread and cold beer for lunch; warm water with stewed rubber for dinner and dry ryebread and cold water for supper!

KONIK. Tell me, Paul, didn't you sometimes "see" things, for instance when you thought of roast goose . . . or lamb in asparagus or the like?

PAUL. My dear fellow, I dreamt one evening in the dusk, that I was eating seventy crowns' worth of sirloin steak and that I drank fourteen bottles of claret with it!

KONIK. (*With enthusiasm*) Lena, we *must* break the law! Think of what drawings I could make then!— Didn't you dream about women too, Paul?

$$2 \times 2 = 5$$

PAUL. (*Unconsciously catching hold of Mrs. KONIK*) Good Lord, don't let's talk about it. . . !

MRS. KONIK. (*Patting his hand*) You poor fellow. . . !

MRS. TRUELSEN. (*Comes in with some flowers. Reads the card attached to the flowers*) Chief Clerk and Mrs. Thomas Hamann, Knight of Danebrog! (*Hands PAUL the flowers and curtsies*) From his loving and bereaved relatives!

KONIK. (*Laughing*) Aha, Mrs. Truelsen! (*Mrs. TRUELSEN goes out smiling*)

PAUL. Did you notice, Gerhard, that he *didn't* resign, our friend, the Chief Clerk? We know our "serious" people, you and I! The louder they cry their wares the less they have for sale! And do you know that he came to see me in prison? I enjoyed the meeting so, but perhaps I was a bit too hard on him. . . .

KONIK. You cannot be too hard on those renegades. . . ! He has been to see us too.

PAUL. To see *you*?

MRS. KONIK. (*Who is arranging the flowers*) Yes. . . .

KONIK. (*From behind a chair*) "Inasmuch as we lived in such an admirable state of wedlock, he thought he might count on our assistance towards a reconciliation between you and his hardboiled daughter." And then he said something about you

$$2 \times 2 = 5$$

becoming editor of "The Conservative." He called it "that venerable bugle." Ha, a newspaper from the stone-age! Fit for rulers of a thousand years ago!

PAUL. (*Laughing*) Easy now, easy. . . . And did he believe it?

KONIK. Of course he did! And it seemed to please him in spite of his changed views.

PAUL. That's why he insists on having Esther and me spliced again; for then I should be a good match.

KONIK. So it isn't true that you have accepted that editorial post?— For I have heard the rumour too.

PAUL. No truth in it at all, dear friend! We poets don't do that sort of thing; we aren't serious enough for that!

MRS. KONIK. Your wife has become so chic and sweet, Paul Abel. . . . And so lively.

PAUL. The last thing I declare to be impossible, knowing the lady as I do.

MRS. KONIK. But I assure you. . . . Isn't it true, Gerhard? We've met her several times. . . .

KONIK. Yes, she ran and jumped over a policeman and three street cars to get to us. . . .

PAUL. I wouldn't take her back even if she jumped over a church spire!

KONIK. That's right, Paul. It's not well to keep

$$2 \times 2 = 5$$

a woman by you too long. . . ! You can see it with mine! It's much better to stick to the lady with the golden hair, then you know what you have.

PAUL. But I have given her the sack too. . . .

KONIK. You are a regular bluebeard!

MRS. KONIK. Paul, Paul. . . . And who has succeeded her?

PAUL. Nobody! After this I'm going to live in celibacy—now that I have had some practice.

KONIK. You're right, you're right! Woman is the vermin of the world, crush her!

MRS. KONIK. I wonder, Gerhard darling, if I oughtn't to take another trip to Helsingborg?

KONIK. Don't you dare!

PAUL. All the same, it is a bit tiresome, this bachelor life, when one has become used to "orderly" relations. I can tell you that, Mrs. Konik.

MRS. KONIK. Paul, you're longing for your wife!

PAUL. (*Laughing*) I? No; "by the Lord in his highest Heaven," I am not!

MRS. TRUELSEN. (*Comes in*) Here's a telegram. . . . Answer prepaid. (PAUL *reads the telegram in silence and then hands it to KONIK*)

KONIK. (*Reading aloud*) "To-morrow the post will be filled at a meeting here at Rudersholm. Do you want it?"

AGNES KLUVER."

Is that the editorial post we talked about?

$$2 \times 2 = 5$$

PAUL. Yes.

KONIK. And what are you going to reply?

PAUL. (*Smiling*) And you ask that? (*Tears up the telegram rather theatrically*)

MRS. TRUELSEN. Goodness, Mr. Abel, you tore up the reply-blank!

PAUL. There'll be no reply. . . . Tell the messenger that. (MRS. TRUELSEN *goes out*)

KONIK. Aren't you going to reply at all?

PAUL. No.

MRS. KONIK. But isn't that rather impolite to Mrs. Kluver?

PAUL. I *have* answered her once and for all, so it seems a bit . . . improper for her to continue with that foolishness.

KONIK. (*With enthusiasm*) You are truly a "man of principle," old chap!

MRS. KONIK. You certainly are! And what was the salary to have been?

PAUL. 5,000 crowns.

MRS. KONIK. (*Frightened*) But then it is wrong of you. . . . But . . . Why . . . Gerhard, did you hear it? 5,000 crowns!

KONIK. (*Crosses his arms over his chest and bows deeply to PAUL*) Sir Knight without fear or blemish, you have my perfect respect!

PAUL. (*Pathetically*) What else *could* I do?

KONIK. That's true, but it's great all the same!

$$2 \times 2 = 5$$

But what the devil, then I wasn't right about my porridge-dish. . . ?

PAUL. Oh yes, but poets and caricaturists are not allowed to join in the competition!

KONIK. 5,000 crowns! I'm afraid I should surrender. . . . Think of all the cigars you could buy with it!

PAUL. Excuse me, I had quite forgotten. . . !
(Brings cigars and offers them)

MRS. TRUELSEN. (Comes in with a visiting card, laughing softly) Mr. Frederick Hamann enquires if Mr. Abel is receiving. . . .

PAUL. Freda. . . . Visiting card . . . ? "Mr. Abel receiving . . . ?" Has she gone crazy?
(Goes quickly into the hall)

MRS. TRUELSEN. (Somewhat gratuitously) Mrs. Swanshield and myself are about the same age; we were confirmed together in '79. . . . (Laughs contemptuously and goes out. PAUL and FREDERICK come in. FREDERICK in brand-new clothes, high hat, gloves and cane with a silver knob. Formal and reserved)

PAUL. Well, you know everybody here, Freda. . . .

FREDERICK. (Bows) I have the honour. . . .
(To PAUL) I desired to be one of the first to congratulate you on your return from your

KONIK. Shall we say: "excursion"!

$$2 \times 2 = 5$$

PAUL. Let's now lay aside formalities, Freda!
(*Smiling*)

MRS. KONIK. Congratulations upon your engagement, Mr. Hamann.

KONIK. May it prove a blessing to you!

FREDERICK. Thanks. . . .

PAUL. (*Shaking him*) Are you chloroformed, Freda?

FREDERICK. (*Straightening his clothes*) No . . . but I don't propose to allow myself to be influenced any longer by the frivolous minds of yourself and your friends!

KONIK. Oh, Himalaya gazing down upon Hindoostan!

FREDERICK. I have come more and more to believe that you have had a bad influence on me, Paul, and, in fact, that you are the cause of my previous failure to get on!

PAUL. (*Not yet taking him seriously*) Well . . . ?

FREDERICK. You coddled my weaknesses and flattered me by calling me "a fairy prince" instead of correcting me by serious talk. . . . But those times are over, thank Heaven, and I have come to a better understanding. (*Takes a pocketbook from his pocket*) And may I now beg leave to repay those little sums with which you have assisted me during that period. . . .

$$2 \times 2 = 5$$

PAUL. You certainly may, and many thanks; I can use the money very nicely just now.

FREDERICK. Do you think it amounts to more than a hundred crowns?

PAUL. No, unfortunately. . . .

FREDERICK. Well, anyhow you can get the balance later if I owe you more. . . . (*Lays a bank-note on the table*) There you are.

PAUL. Tremendous thanks!

FREDERICK. My parents wish to be remembered.

PAUL. Thanks. . . . They sent me flowers too.

FREDERICK. My sister Esther too?

PAUL. No, not your "sister Esther" . . . at least, not yet.

FREDERICK. I am glad of that. . . . I now have a considerable influence over her— Marriage has ripened me into a man!

PAUL. What marriage, little Freda . . . ? Mine?

FREDERICK. No, mine.

PAUL. But you aren't married yet.

FREDERICK. Only a mere formality is lacking!— Life isn't mere play, as you have gone about and taught, dear Paul!

KONIK. You bet your life it isn't!

FREDERICK. But I have to withdraw; my wife and I are looking for an apartment. . . . She is waiting

$$2 \times 2 = 5$$

downstairs in the doorway. . . . She won't have anything to do with you and your friends. . . .

PAUL. By the way, Freda, I can give you the greetings of your son-in-law, the preacher.

FREDERICK. Oh yes, he is the spiritual guide where . . . where you come from.

PAUL. Yes, very much so!

FREDERICK. Good-bye. . . . (*Bows all around*)

PAUL. (*Bows*) Good-bye, dear Freda. . . . (*Bursts out laughing*) Upon my soul, you did that splendidly!

KONIK. Insanely! Just as well as I did a while ago!

MRS. KONIK. Yes, it certainly was amusing, Mr. Hamann. . . . You're quite an actor!

PAUL. Tremendous!

FREDERICK. Dear Paul, I can see that you *will* not understand that deep down in my mind there is earnestness, and that this earnestness has now come to the surface! Let me, therefore, explain to you my present standpoint. According to the best of your ability you have always been good and kind to me, and for that I have been grateful to you. But—excuse my speaking plainly—your character lacks depth! And now our old accounts are settled it seems to me that, for the present at least, it would be best if we took different roads! So good-bye once

$$2 \times 2 = 5$$

more! It has been a pleasure to me to see you looking so well!

PAUL. Good-bye, Freda, good-bye. . . ! My regards to your wife!

FREDERICK. Haven't you a cigar?

PAUL. With pleasure. (*Offering him one*)

FREDERICK. Is it a good one?

PAUL. No!

FREDERICK. Well, then I'll rather do without it. . . . Good-bye. . . . (*Goes out*)

KONIK. I'll be damned if this isn't the worst I have seen yet!

PAUL. (*Earnestly*) Twice two are five!

MRS. KONIK. (*Compassionately*) Aren't you rather sorry about it, really, Paul Abel . . . ? You used to be so fond of him.

PAUL. Oh, a little, perhaps. . . . 'And yet again, no! You see, we have the laugh, Mrs. Konik. . . . The redeeming smile!

MRS. KONIK. But you can't smile at everything. . . .

PAUL and KONIK. (*At the same time*) *Everything!*

MRS. KONIK. Now don't you think that it is slightly dangerous?

KONIK. Yes. . . . For the one we smile at!

MRS. KONIK. But, Paul, take that matter of the

$$2 \times 2 = 5$$

editorial post for instance; you *are* taking that seriously. . . .

PAUL. Yes, but I oughtn't to . . . !

MRS. TRUELSEN. (*Coming in to lay the table*)
Beg your pardon, but wouldn't Mr. and Mrs. Konik give Mr. Abel the pleasure of lunching with him?

PAUL. Yes, do, please?

KONIK. (*Looking at his watch*) Are you mad? We ought to have gone long ago. Come along, Lena!

MRS. KONIK. Thank you, dear Mrs. Truelsen, for your kindness, but there is so much work waiting for us at home. . . .

KONIK. By the way, Paul, *I* have become a poet too!

PAUL. The deuce you have! We have enough of them.

KONIK. (*Pointing to his wife*) It's to her! It's in verse! I made them the day she had run away from me.

MRS. KONIK. And they are fine!

PAUL. Let's hear.

KONIK. (*With his arm around his wife*)

You are so sweet of body
You are so sweet of soul
The Lord should have retained you
For Heaven is your goal.

$$2 \times 2 = 5$$

As a little, dumpy angel
Like Rafæl used to paint
No trouble would have pained you
In Heaven as a saint.

Instead you wife and mother
Became, now was it wise?
But wherefore should *I* bother
You gave *me* paradise.

How about *that*?

PAUL. Splendid!

MRS. TRUELSEN. Very sweet!

KONIK. Down with the women! (*Goes out with his wife, followed by PAUL*)

PAUL. (*Comes back*)

MRS. TRUELSEN. That's what I call a lovely couple, those two! (*Setting the table*)

PAUL. Lovely!

MRS. TRUELSEN. Always contented and happy with each other. . . .

PAUL. And in love!—God only knows how the devil they manage it, Mrs. Truelsen!

MRS. TRUELSEN. Yes, that's a riddle to all of us!— *Are* you going away this afternoon, Mr. Abel?

PAUL. Yes, at 2:34! Can you get my things ready in time?

MRS. TRUELSEN. Of course I can. . . . But it

does seem to me, Mr. Abel, that you *might* stay here a few days so that your friends might have some pleasure in seeing you.

PAUL. That's very sweet of you, dear Mrs. Truelsen. . . . But I *must* get out and draw a breath of fresh air! Just think of it, I haven't seen a green leaf for a whole month!

MRS. TRUELSEN. No, dear me, I suppose you haven't, poor fellow. . . . Tell me, how were things out there in the black hole. . . . (*Hall-bell rings*) The bell's ringing; I suppose it's some more flowers. . . . (*Goes out—comes in again—says rather stiffly*) It's a lady. . . .

PAUL. (*Interested*) Ah, a lady . . . ! Do you know her?

MRS. TRUELSEN. No.

PAUL. What does she look like?

MRS. TRUELSEN. It's one of those with hair. . . . Shall I tell her you aren't at home?

PAUL. Oh no, what's the matter with you? One can't do that. . . . (*The hall-door opens and ESTHER comes in*)

ESTHER. (*With a bunch of roses. She is chic, and prettily dressed and her hair is curled and combed away from her forehead*)

PAUL. (*Happily surprised. Bursts out*) Esther . . . ! Excuse me, Mrs. Truelsen, but couldn't you . . . ?

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MRS. TRUELSEN. Goodness, yes! (*Offended*) I am not going to disturb you. (*Goes out*)

PAUL. (*Steps forward*) But, Esther, how splendid you are looking!

ESTHER. (*Handing him the flowers*) I wanted to bring you these. . . .

PAUL. (*Taking them*) What lovely roses . . . ! (*Lays them aside and seizes her hands*) I hardly know you again, you look so beautiful.

ESTHER. Do you think so?

PAUL. Won't you sit down?

ESTHER. No, thanks. . . . I'm going away immediately.

PAUL. (*Circles about her*) No, no! Sit down awhile that I may have a good look at you.

ESTHER. (*Sits down on the chaise longue*)

PAUL. (*More and more taken with her*) How lovely you have become!

ESTHER. Have I? I hope you aren't angry because I've come up here?

PAUL. Angry? Because suddenly a very lovely lady steps into my room looking quite changed!

ESTHER. (*Smiles*)

PAUL. And the way you smile . . . ! May I sit beside you awhile . . . ? (*Sits down*) And what pretty little hands you have got!

ESTHER. (*Laughing*) Why, I've always had them. . . .

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PAUL. No, you haven't! And your hair is combed up!

ESTHER. You asked me to do that. . . .

PAUL. (*Puts his arm around her*)

MRS. TRUELSEN. (*Comes in with flowers*)

PAUL. (*Gets up angrily*) What are you running in and out for all the time, Mrs. Truelsen?

MRS. TRUELSEN. (*Stiffly*) Flowers from Mr. Hamann the School Principal. . . .

PAUL. I wish the devil would fly away with his vegetables!

ESTHER. (*Laughs aloud*)

PAUL. (*Charmed*) That's my wife, Mrs. Truelsen, sitting there laughing so beautifully!

MRS. TRUELSEN. (*Somewhat mollified*) So that is Mrs. . . . ! Oh, I see it now . . . ! Welcome! Mrs. Abel has got some new hair. . . . Nowadays all sorts of tricks are allowed.

PAUL. Well, you better go, Mrs. Truelsen. . . . We have business to attend to.

MRS. TRUELSEN. But the lunch . . . ? You were so hungry, Mr. Abel. . . .

PAUL. *I?* Not at all!

MRS. TRUELSEN. Perhaps Mrs. Abel will lunch too?

ESTHER. Thank you. . . .

PAUL. (*Delighted*) Will you?

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MRS. TRUELSEN. Mr. Abel will have to lunch at once, for he is going away!

ESTHER. (*Uneasy*) Are you going away, Paul?

PAUL. No, I'm not going to leave this spot. . . ! That's something Mrs. Truelsen has invented just to be interesting!

MRS. TRUELSEN. *I?*

PAUL. (*Leads her towards the door*) Good-bye, Mrs. Truelsen. . . .

MRS. TRUELSEN. (*Goes out angrily*)

ESTHER. (*Laughs*)

PAUL. Will the lady permit me to help her take off her coat?

ESTHER. Thanks. . . .

PAUL. (*Helping her. With ardour*) Now tell me, little lady, why you came up here . . . ?

ESTHER. (*Embracing him*) Because I want you myself. . . . Because I have come to love you so tremendously since we are no longer together. . . . Because I don't want anyone else to have you. . . . Frederick has told me that. . . .

PAUL. That ass . . . ! It was he who dragged her. . . .

ESTHER. Do you remember that you used so often to reproach me with not being flesh and blood. . . . Now I *am* flesh and blood. . . . Let me remain with you!

PAUL. With the greatest pleasure . . . ! Even if we should have to separate again in a week!

ESTHER. No, no. . . . Henceforth we shall be really good and sweet to one another—for ever!

PAUL. (*Presses her close*) Indeed we shall. . . . I wish evening would hurry up and come. . . .

ESTHER. (*Pushing him away shyly— Smiling*) You are wearing your patent leather shoes. . . .

PAUL. Yes. . . . And just see what they look like now . . . ! “We do not guarantee the patent leather!”— And the worst of it is that it will be a long time before I can afford a pair of new ones!

ESTHER. (*With a shade of her stiffness*) Ye-es . . . ?

PAUL. Yes, remember my book got confiscated and a new book is a long way off.

ESTHER. But you don’t need to write books any more . . .

PAUL. (*Laughing*) Are *you* going to take over the business?

ESTHER. Father said you were to become editor. . . .

PAUL. O-oh, well . . . yes!

ESTHER. (*Stiffly*) Perhaps it isn’t true. . . . Perhaps you haven’t had any offer from Mrs. Kluver after all?

PAUL. Certainly I had . . . ! Why, a few mo-
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ments ago I received a telegram telling me that I should have to decide to-day.

ESTHER. (*Intently*) Well . . . ?

PAUL. I tore up the telegram and did not answer at all. . . . But if *you* want me to take the position then I'll take it. . . . Of course!

ESTHER. (*Joyfully*) Will you?

PAUL. Yes, for we cannot "love" each other if we have nothing to live on. . . . Isn't that what you mean?

ESTHER. (*Eagerly*) No, it isn't that, it isn't that at all. . . . At least not that *alone*! But it seems to me that you would suit so splendidly as editor of that paper.

PAUL. Splendidly! Yes! Twice two are five!

ESTHER. What are you talking about?

PAUL. Oh, nothing. . . .

ESTHER. It seems to me that it could be like a mission for you! You would bring new blood, new vigour and new points of view. . . .

PAUL. Undoubtedly!

ESTHER. With your authority you could support the young poets and artists. . . . (*Close to him*) And think of it, Paul, how lovely it would be for the two of us together when you came home from work, free from all economic worries and I had made the rooms cozy for you with flowers and good food and . . .

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PAUL. And new patent leather shoes . . .

ESTHER. (*Doubting a little*) But Paul . . .

PAUL. I know an agrarian who sold his vote outright at the last congressional election for two hams and a leg of lamb. . . . And now he is perfectly happy and is Chief of the Tax Office!

ESTHER. Paul. . . . I'm afraid you're making fun of me. . . .

PAUL. Not at all, little Esther! For the sake of your white arms I would become editor of the "Evangelical Messenger"! A fig for "convictions" and "standpoints" where it concerns the happiness of two people!

ESTHER. Yes, isn't that so? How happy we shall be! But you mustn't take this step for *my* sake, Paul, for I should reproach myself all my life if . . .

PAUL. No, little Esther, forgive me. . . . I do it first and foremost for the sake of the Fatherland, the young generation and the new literature!

ESTHER. You are great, Paul Abel!

PAUL. Yes, Esther Hamann, "greatness" has always been the strongest trait in my character. . . . ! Are you going to remain with me . . . at once . . . right now?

ESTHER. (*Shyly*) Yes, now I am yours. . . . How can I be anything else . . . ? And the telegram to Mrs. Kluver?

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PAUL. We'll send that off after lunch.

ESTHER. Why not at once in the dawn of your resolution?

PAUL. Of course you are right once more . . . of course! (*Calling*) Mrs. Truelsen!

MRS. TRUELSEN. (*Comes in*)

PAUL. Have you a telegram blank, Mrs. Truelsen?

MRS. TRUELSEN. But you said that you weren't going to answer . . . !

PAUL. That was a quarter of an hour ago! But thank Heaven I submit to the law of evolution, Mrs. Truelsen. Have you a blank?

MRS. TRUELSEN. I think so. . . . (*Goes out*)

ESTHER. May I write the telegram, Paul? It will amuse you in the future. . . .

PAUL. It certainly will!

ESTHER. How I love you! I'll never leave you again.

PAUL. No . . . ! And when we celebrate our silver wedding no doubt I shall have acquired a wooden leg and then all the guests must cut their names in it in memory of the day!

ESTHER. I'm sure you're making fun of me, Paul, but I don't care. . . .

(MRS. TRUELSEN *comes in with the blank*. ESTHER *sits down at the writing-table*)

PAUL. (*Dictates*) "Mrs. Kluver

$$2 \times 2 = 5$$

Rudersholm

Vedby Station.

I accept the position—for the sake of the Fatherland.” Please see that it goes off, Mrs. Truelsen.

ESTHER. Immediately! You understand!

MRS. TRUELSEN. All right. . . . (*Goes out*)

PAUL. (*Smiles and takes ESTHER's hand*) How unjust we have been to you women: It is *you* who are the Fatherland's “men of principle”! What a golden age will come when some day we can get you into Congress!

MRS. TRUELSEN. (*Comes in*) A messenger boy is outside with some flowers, but he will only give them to Mr. Abel personally.

PAUL. Good, let him come in.

MRS. TRUELSEN. (*Goes out*)

ESTHER. Oh, Paul, how good and faithful we are going to be to each other, now we have come together again?

PAUL. (*His arms are about her and they remain like that*) We certainly shall, little Esther! What the hearts have joined together let no theories put asunder!

MESSENGER BOY. (*Comes in with a bunch of roses*) I was to say that here are some flowers for Mr. Paul Abel from Miss Othella Lustig.

CURTAIN

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IN BELLES-LETTRES

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